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The Empire of the Mogho Naba,
Customs of the Mossi of Upper Volta

[L'Empire du Mogho-Naba, Coutumes des
Mossi de la Haute-Volta]

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[46]

Chapter 3

Political, Administrative, and Judicial
Organization of the Mossi Empire

I. Political and Administrative Organization

643 The Mossi empire of Ouagadougou was governed prior to the period of French occupation by a supreme chief, the Mogho Naba, who was revered by all his subjects as a "god" and whose territory, in the minds of his people, had no limits. He had the power of life and death over all his subjects.

[192] The word mogho means "country of the Mossi," but by extension it also means "the world." Thus, in this sense the Mogho Naba was regarded as the master of the world.

643 It is said that he had under his rule 333 chiefs, naba, among
631 whom were his ministers, the three sogon'kassemse (great servitors), and some forty petty chiefs called kougzindba, which refers to the heaps of stones designating the place of each minister or petty naba in the emperor's court.

643 The authority of the Mogho Naba over his vassals. In spite of
177 the claims made by a colonial official who was trying to free the canton chiefs of one of the administrative districts of the colony from the authority of the Mogho Naba, the emperor's power never was merely nominal. If it has become so, it is a consequence of the intervention of French [47] administrative authority in the politics of the country -- an intervention which has resulted in assigning too much power to certain chiefs.

643 I do not mean to imply that before French penetration into the
669 country there were not real conflicts, wars or mere skirmishes (1),

1. In Chapter 1 [not translated] we described in great detail the war waged by the Mogho Naba Sanum and Wobgo against Lallé. We said also that Sanum warred with the Boussouma Naba and with Boulsa.

but the chiefs who tried by these means to free themselves from the emperor's authority were usually punished for their temerity.

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Ministers and officials in the court of the emperor of the Mossi. We shall provide a list of the persons making up the emperor's court in a later chapter.

Functions of the Ministers

645 The four ministers, Ouidi Naba, Larallé Naba, Gounga Naba, and Baloum Naba, were charged with the nomination of the kombemba (plural of kombéré, vassal chief), subject to the emperor's approval. At the present time they retain the same prerogatives subject to ratification by the administrative authorities. These ministers further assisted the emperor in deciding important matters whenever he called upon them, and they transmitted the orders of the Mogho Naba to [48] his vassals. Today the Mogho Naba is hardly concerned with the regulation of affairs, since these 643 648 are dealt with by his ministers or by the French authorities. However, the leading court dignitaries always submit to him matters of any importance, they keep him informed about all matters of general interest, and, finally, they report to him any interviews which they may have had with the administrator of the circle, who represents the government of the colony [Ed., the circle (Fr., cercle) is the largest French administrative unit below the colony (Fr., colonie)].

Organization of Territorial Control

634 645 Each of the emperor's ministers had authority -- we shall presently see under what conditions -- over a group of cantons [Ed., the canton (Fr., canton) is a traditional Mossi administrative unit, containing a number of villages, and several cantons together form a province; the native districts were incorporated into the French administrative system to some extent]. A kombéré naba was head of each canton. Originally and up to the time of Naba Sanum's reign, the Baloum Naba commanded the dimbissi (canton chiefs who were descendants of the recent Mogho Nabas), while the other cantons, except the most thickly populated and hence the richest, such as Zittenga, Manga, etc., were distributed

634 among the other ministers. The rich and important cantons
 645 were entrusted to the Kamsaogo Naba, chief eunuch. This was
 [839] because the emperor wanted to be sure that he would recover
 the fortune left by this minister at his death. Since the latter
 was merely the guardian of the king's wives, he had no legitimate
 heirs. The eunuch appointed to replace him had to establish his
 own personal fortunes. Only the horses or women which the late
 minister might have given [49] during his lifetime to persons in
 his section were left with their owners. [Ed., Mossi villages are
 [62] divided into sections (Fr., quartier), which are really hamlets
 containing several households or compounds. These sections are
 indigenous, not colonial subdivisions.]

Powers of the Ministers over the Vassal Chiefs of the Mogho Naba

634 It would be a mistake to think that before the French occu-
 645 pation the ministers had any great authority over the canton chief.
 642 Actually, the ministers' role, as has been pointed out, was to act
 as intermediaries between the emperor and the canton chiefs.
 They could not, however, under any right or pretext, intervene
 in canton affairs, since the kombéré was the only lord in the area
 whose command had been conferred upon him as an appanage by
 the Mogho Naba.

That is why it has been possible for canton chiefs who were
 dissatisfied with the minister under whose rule they found them-
 selves to report, henceforth, to another minister. Furthermore,
 the Mogho Naba saw no objection to this. The Mossi expression,
 [538] Gansobend'ka sambiri n'tont vigri yé ("hospitality is not like kin-
 ship; you can evade it") amply illustrates the accuracy of the
 [651] foregoing. If it is further noted that before the French occupation
 the naba came to Ouagadougou only once a year to pay their re-
 spects to the emperor and to bring him annual tribute, one will
 readily understand the insignificance of the ministers' authority
 over them.

This does not mean, of course, that it was possible to [50]
 do without any intermediaries, but rather that it was possible to
 choose them freely. In any case, one of the incentives to

634 submission was based solely on the fact that although the em-
645 peror named new canton chiefs, he was too rempte to know any-
642 thing about the children of deceased naba, so, in order to make
sure during his own lifetime that his eldest son would succeed
him, the kombéré affected some respect toward the emperor's
ministers and made gifts to the principal dignitaries at Ouagadougou.

631 Present situation. It is my belief that the present political
648 and administrative reorganization, which dates back about eighteen
years (1912), has taken no account whatsoever of the existing
hierarchy of ministers in the distribution of territorial control. Thus,
it has come about that a given minister has to pass through numer-
ous villages which are under the authority of another minister in
order to reach his own administrative area. In addition, if one
examines the situation closely, it seems that the sole aim of the
administration ["administration" always refers to French adminis-
tration] at that time was to reward certain young and capable
ministers at the expense of those who were too old.

In point of fact, however, one must go back to 1908 to find
the causes of such a state of disorganization. At that time the late
Larrhallé Naba, Pawitraogo, a province chief, was sent off on a
mission to Koudougou, and his vacated office had to be filled.
Later on the emperor dismissed the Kamsogho Naba [51] and re-
placed him with an "incompetent," so the local administration
decided to entrust the province to a more qualified minister.

It would be highly desirable if a new reorganization were put
into effect which would 1) progressively eliminate certain insig-
nificant cantons by combining them into larger units; 2) gather the
so-called independent villages into cantons; and 3) grant to province
chiefs identical material rewards. This last can only be achieved
by an equitable allotment of the cantons. The French administra-
tion has granted equal salaries to all province chiefs and, as a con-
sequence, has established an equality which did not formerly exist.
Three of these officials are now educated men; they enjoy equal
consideration, have the same needs, and alike perform valuable
services. They should all be accorded equal advantages if jealousy
and discontent are to be avoided.

631 Finally, to return to the kombemba, it should be stated that
the vassals of the Mogho Naba at Koudougou and Kaya enjoy a

63/ certain amount of independence since they can communicate with the circle commanders with no intermediary other than the interpreter, an indispensable adjunct as long as the chiefs do not attend the [French] schools. On the other hand, the authority of the vassal chiefs still attached to the administrative district of Ouagadougou is, if not entirely lost, at least greatly diminished.

Indeed, their action is thwarted by that of the ministers, the province chiefs, from whom [52] they receive orders, sometimes falsified or amplified by ambitious intermediaries.

It must certainly be conceded that such a state of affairs may have -- it has had -- an unfortunate effect on the progress of these naba. This is an evil which should be remedied without delay.

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565 The local administration at the very beginning made the serious error of failing to take into account the importance of the canton chiefs, most of whom (see the list in the appendix [not translated]) are descendants of the Mogho Naba. On the other hand, virtually all the ministers and other court officials, despite the respect one owes them and the privileges they enjoy, are of humble origin (see Chapter 4 for the origins of the Ouidi Naba and the Larrhallé Naba, for example).

The Petty Kings (Dima) in the Past and Today

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631 As has been noted in the introductory chapter [not translated], some of the chiefs have gradually freed themselves from the authority of the Mogho Naba and have assumed the title of dima, that is, "king." These chiefs are the Boussouma Naba of the Kaya circle, the Konquizitenga Naba of the Kougoudou circle, the Yako Naba of the Kougoudou circle (Yako subdivision), and the Riziam Naba of the Ouahigouya circle.

These chiefs were, in a sense, independent "rulers," since the emperor's suzerainty over them was so weak [53] that they enjoyed almost complete independence. Some of them, notably the Boussouma Naba and the Yako Naba, have authority over canton chiefs whom they invest in the same way the emperor does.

643 These dima maintain courts which with some exceptions, are like-
631 that of the emperor of the Mossi.

They were appointed directly by their own ministers; the emperor took no effective role in the proceedings.

Today. The local administration has made these petty kings into simple province chiefs and sometimes -- as happened to the Konquizitenga Naba -- into mere canton chiefs.

Respect due the Mogho Naba. Each year the petty dima sent numerous gifts to the Mogho Naba. (horses, cattle, and cowries).

643 An error. The Tenkodogo Naba (1), contrary [54] to what

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634 1. It should not be assumed that the Tenkodogo Naba controls all the cantons in the administrative district of Tenkodogo.

Several Boussancé [Busansi] cantons were ruled by the Mogho Naba before the French occupation. Out of the 14 cantons which now make up the province called Boussanga, 11 were under the emperor's jurisdiction and their chiefs were appointed by him. Like all vassal chiefs, they were required to visit the emperor once a year and to bring him annual tribute.

Since Tenkodogo has been changed first to a subdivision and then to an autonomous circle, the Boussancé chiefs involved have been appointed directly by the local administration with the consent of the population; the Mogho Naba was no longer consulted. After trouble arose over the appointment of a canton chief, the Mogho Naba had to intervene, and from this affair arose the necessity of putting a relative of the emperor at the head of those cantons organized

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as provinces. The choice fell upon a uterine brother of Naba Kom, Moustapha Kongo.

He was recalled in 1930 after ruling for only three years. His dismissal was certainly due to errors committed in the performance of his duties, but it was also caused by the fact that the Boussancé had been independent too long to take kindly to a master.

Thus, as was pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, the local administration has interfered too much with the organization of the Mossi empire. The position of the Mogho Naba has been completely distorted, and his prestige diminished. This is why the ill-informed official to whom we have already alluded could state that the authority of the Mogho Naba over his vassal chiefs was merely nominal.

A list of Boussancé cantons under the authority of the Mogho Naba follows: (1) Niaogo, (2) Niarba, (3) Lenga, (4) Gon Boussougou, (5) Komtoéga, (6) Beguedo, (7) Ouanragou, (8) Sanogo, (9) Toalla, (10) Zourga, (11) Yakala.

643 has been accepted up to now, is a true king in his territory and as such is absolutely independent of the Mogho Naba at Ouagadougou, to the same degree as the head of the state of Yatenga (Ouahigouya) and the head of Fada N'Gourma.

As was pointed out in an earlier chapter [not translated], the Tenkodogo Naba is the descendant of Naba Zoungrana, the son of Ouedraogo, and is consequently the "elder" of the Mogho Naba, who is a descendant of Naba Oubri, the founder of the Mossi dynasty of Ouagadougou.

631 The Boulsa Naba, a direct descendant of the kourita [representative after death] of [55] Naba Oubri, is not a dima but merely
635 a kombéré. He has a vassal, to be sure, the chief of Koupéla in the circle of Tenkodogo who is now considered a province chief, but the Boulsa Naba himself is a vassal of the Mogho Naba.

II. Military Organization

701 An army, properly speaking, with cadres and hierarchies, did not exist among the Mossi.

721 In the event of war, the Tansoba or Tampsoba (war minister) notified the canton chiefs who promptly assembled with all their able-bodied men and as many horsemen as possible.

705 The villages were charged with feeding the soldiers.

III. Judicial Organization

692 Justice was rendered in conformity with local customs which
693 had been handed down from generation to generation and according to local practice.

1. By village chiefs, assisted by some of the elders, for petty affairs, pilfering, and insults.

2. The canton chief, assisted by his court dignitaries and the minister, ruled on matters concerning theft, adultery, and bodily attacks, as well as on other matters.

3. The Mogho Naba took cognizance of all matters of general interest, especially with crimes of assassination and murder. In theory, he could by himself pronounce the death sentence on the
[565] nakomsé [descendants of Mogho Naba]. Contrary to general belief, a [56] kombéré (canton chief) also had the power of life and death over his subjects. How many individuals have been put to death merely because they were wealthy! How many village chiefs have been killed by the canton chiefs over their territories without any intervention by the Mogho Naba! The nakomsé could
565 be executed, however, only for very serious crimes, such as
684 adultery with a woman of the nobility. The guilty man was led
762 into the bush by old nakomsé; they gave him a rope with which he was expected to hang himself and thus expiate his crime.

694 Justice was free; no fee was expected or assessed. The plaintiff,
431 however, customarily presented the naba with a white or light gray rooster, accompanied by the traditional satchel containing from 200 to 1,000 cowries.

The Court of the Mogho Naba. Tribute and Payments Due.
Obligations of Mossi Subjects to their Naba.

Morning Honors Paid to the Emperor of the Mossi

644 The council of the emperor of the Mossi is held every morning in front of an antechamber called zango which opens out upon a very large courtyard.

821 The Mossi have for a long time regarded the sun as a "god."
776 Wend'pous yan, "God shows himself," refers to the rising of
643 the sun, but it is used in a figurative sense to refer to the emergence of the Mogho Naba. This illustrates the regard held by the Mossi people for their chief since he is compared to the star of daylight and thus to a "god."

643 The Mogho Naba appears each morning dressed in an ample
292 red robe and with a red gourmousga (a kind of burnoose) folded and thrown over his shoulders. On his head he wears a cap, a fez, topped with a wazourfou sebré (literally, "silver paper" [streamers], that is to say, silver amulet). Red represents the light that comes
[822] with the appearance of the sun, while the silver on the cap represents the brilliance of the star itself.

644 Before the time set for the start of the ceremony, the three
sogon 'kassemse (great servitors) bring into the courtyard the [58] cushion, nagpouré, and all the other insignia of office. As soon as
[201] the Mogho Naba appears, they arise and make a snapping sound with thumb and index finger to indicate that the naba is coming.

"Wend'pous yan" is also cried out by the gagando and luinsé
[533] (drummers) as soon as His Majesty sits down. The Bend 'Naba [chief drummer] is the only one who does not beat his drum; instead, he rubs his finger back and forth over the waxed part of the drum head to imitate the roar of the lion. Four or five young men bearing loaded rifles take their places in front of the emperor.

Honors are rendered to the Mogho Naba in the following order.

1. The Samandé Naba, Baloum Naba, Wedranga Naba, and Simandé Nabila, as well as the Zusoabin 'kassanga (chief eunuch and guardian of the emperor's household), are the first to greet His Majesty and to inquire about his health.

644 2. Next come the Ouidi Naba, the Larralé Naba, the Kam-
saogo Naba, the Gounga Naba, the Nemdo Naba, and the Poé
Naba.

[527
788] 3. On Friday and other Moslem holidays, the imam who rep-
resents Islam at Ouagadougou comes to give the doua, a kind of
benediction which consists of reciting verses from the Koran, in
the morning as well as in the evening.

Lebeg'sonre. As soon as these honors have been completed,
the Mogho Naba goes back into his house to put on a less dazzling
costume. Shortly thereafter he once more returns to the court-
yard.

[59] Next the Baloum Naba and his retinue present their
respects as described above. The Ouidi Naba and his followers
are not required to do so unless they have foreigners to present to
His Majesty.

[533] Then, the Bend'Naba, gangando, and luinsé (drummers) and
the doudissi (violin players) play together in praise of the Mogho
Naba.

It should be noted that the Mogho Naba speaks to no one be-
fore his morning appearance. It is not until he has finished his
ceremonial duties and returned to his apartments that his tampa
(sisters) greet him.

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273 Before the officials and ministers of the court return to their
homes and as soon as the Mogho Naba has withdrawn, the Sogon'-
kassanga, that is, the ranking servitor, offers them some dam
(known as dolo or fermented millet beer).

1. One canari [jar] of dam is offered to the Baloum Naba, who
is obligated to give a gourdful to the Zusoaba, one to the Wedkim
Naba (chief groom), and one to the Soré Naba (Bendré, "chief of
the path").

2. A canari of dam is then offered to the Ouidi Naba who is
obligated to give a gourdful to the Poé Naba (chief confessor for
the wives and pages of the Mogho Naba) and one koré [gourd] to
the Bend'Naba. He drinks the remainder with the other ministers
in his retinue.

[276] 3. On Fridays and holidays, kola nuts, gouré are offered to the
imam after he has given his doua and before the Mogho Naba goes
to renew his pledge of loyalty [60] to France before the representa-
tive of the Republic in Upper Volta.

644 The Mogho Naba spends the rest of the day receiving individ-
431 uals who have come to see him, accepting poussoum (gifts to the
chief) and giving dam, gouré, foutou (garments), etc., and listen-
ing to the praises of his courtiers.

Mogho Naba Na Tough'la, "The Mogho Naba Goes to La" (1)

1. A dependent village in the administra-
tive district of Yako, Koudougou Circle.

173 Tradition relates that a certain Mogho Naba, Naba Warga,
644 had a favorite, the only one who knew that his preferred food was
[262] léla (fruit of the léhinga or wild plum tree). It should be added
that ordinarily anything might be chosen as a favorite food, and it
should not be supposed that the Mogho Naba eats only the best
foods. Obviously he does not lack choice morsels, but he cannot
be expected to like everything. One day this woman asked leave
to visit her home at La and failed to return. The Mogho Naba,
tired of waiting and missing his favorite food, had his horse saddled
one morning and announced that he wished to go and join his wife.
His ministers begged him to stay at home and asked him to put
off his departure until the next day. . . Every morning the prepara-
tions for the departure were repeated and always there was the same
pleading, up to the time of the ruler's death. His son, [61] who
succeeded him, chose to follow his example. The following para-
graph describes the manner in which this custom was still practiced
only a few years ago.

[492] When the Mogho Naba appears in the morning, one of his
horses, partially harnessed, is brought into the courtyard bearing
a saddle with silver stirrups, but with the girth unbuckled. After
the Mogho Naba has responded to the salutations of his ministers
and the whole court and has dealt with some minor matters, he
declares that he is going to La. The court officials, especially the
Kamsaongo Naba, appear before him and say: "Sire, order them
to unsaddle your horse; you shall go tomorrow." The Mogho Naba
of course agrees to this, but he retires to his apartments rather

173 abruptly, as though he were somewhat provoked by this obstacle
644 to what he wants to do. At the same time the saddle is removed
and the horse returned to the stables.

It should also be noted that every morning the pougtiéma (first wife) orders a basket and hamper to be filled with all the things needed for a journey, intending to accompany her husband to La.

As soon as the Mogho Naba postpones his journey to the following day, the pougtiéma, duly warned, unpacks her basket.

Today, the breath of civilization has blown upon these ancient practices, and the present Mogho Naba merely sees his horse, which is walked up and down while he is receiving his ministers. The animal is at once taken back to the stables when the [62] king returns to his palace without having tried to mount it, much less having heard any entreaties from the Kamsaongo Naba.

Koaga Basgo

644 At sundown each day the Baloum Naba goes to the residence
789 of the Mogho Naba for the koaga. Only the Zusobin-Kassanga (chief eunuch) and the Sogon'kassanga (ranking servitor) assist at this performance. The koaga is a sort of earthenware basin into which is put a bit of fire and ... mystery. The head servitor places the koaga in the courtyard in front of the antechamber and blows on the fire, which quickly blazes up and then dies down. Meanwhile, the bendré (drummer) has been rubbing his hand back and forth over the waxed portion of the drumhead.

[687] During the whole performance, no one is allowed either to enter or leave the house of the Mogho Naba. Anyone coming from the outside is not allowed to pass through the courtyard during the proceedings and anyone caught watching the koaga basgo was severely punished by the lash or even executed. When the performance is over, the Zusoba and the Baloum Naba, each of whom was seated at a particular place, arise, then approach and greet each other, and wait to be served some dam before separating for the rest of the night. They sometimes also salute the Mogho Naba before returning to their quarters.

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Ministers and Officials of the Court of the Mogho Naba

644 Ministers. (a) Ouidi Naba (literally, "chief of the horses,"
645 or superintendent of His Majesty's stables). In the old days the
Ouidi Naba had the duty of choosing the color and kind of horse
suitable for the Mogho Naba. He usually had charge of the horses
of deceased chiefs.

202 If a kombéré (canton chief) owned horses during his lifetime,
644 upon his death one of them is sent to the Mogho Naba in
Ouagadougou as bearer of the sad news. Branches of the tahnga
(karite [or shea] tree), wound with white rope, are tied to the
horse's tail.

[64] The horse thus presented to the Mogho Naba is then
handed over to one of the representatives of the Ouidi Naba who,
after cutting loose the branches with a knife and leaving them in
the courtyard of the Mogho Naba, leads the animal to Ouidin
[section of the Ouidi Naba].

Unless the Mogho Naba gives the horse to someone, the Ouidi
Naba is free to dispose of it.

645 (b) Larrhallé Naba, second minister of the Mogho Naba. For-
merly he accompanied the Tansoba or Tampsoba to war.

In the section where the Larrhallé Naba now lives, there were
once enormous trees whose leaves were constantly astir. When he
was made a minister, the Larrhallé Naba said that he wished to dwell
at the place "where the leaves on the trees are always astir" (tisse
vand'sin y a lag, lag zighin wan). From this came the name of
Larrhallé, which designates the section.

(c) Gounga Naba, third minister (1). His section stands in a

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173 1. Originally the Gounga Naba was the prime
minister, and the title was his by right
since he was a companion of Naba Oubri.
One day, as he was attending to a natural
need, he met a very handsome young man
and offered his friendship to him; the
latter accepted. Later he presented the boy
to Naba Oubri who adopted him, settled
him at court, and put him in charge of the
royal stables. The Gounga Naba then said

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to the Mogho Naba: "Since I have come to you, give the first rank to this man. I will show him what he must do to please you. He will be the Ouidi Naba."

A man from Tansobongo, having heard that the Ouidi Naba was living in the greatest ease, came to see him. He, too, was a handsome youth. He was presented to the Mogho Naba (Naba Oubri) by the Gounga Naba who proposed the young man's appointment as second minister, the Larrhallé Naba, and reserved for himself the post of third minister.

So it came about that the Gounga Naba is the emperor's third minister.

645 place where there were once many goumsé (gounga, silk-cotton tree); hence, his name.

[126] He is a brother-in-arms of the Tansoba and always accompanied him to war, where he chose death rather than defeat, especially if the Tansoba had been killed.

644 (d) Baloum Naba, the chief steward of the palace and chief servitor of the Mogho Naba. He never goes to war, but remains always at the side of the Mogho Naba. It is his duty to carry out

[182] [65] sacrifices, such as killing the chickens or livestock offered to the manes or to the spirits when such sacrifices are prescribed by the soothsayers or other charlatans for the health and well-being of the Mogho Naba.

(e) Kamsaogho Naba, formerly accompanied the Tansoba to war. The Kamsaogho Naba is a eunuch, and for this reason he is [839] commonly called Mogho Naba na poug'tiéma, "first wife of the Mogho Naba."

Other personages (not ministers). (a) Samandé Naba, in charge of all of the people in the outer courtyard of the Mogho Naba and a brother-in-arms of the Larrhallé Naba.

644 (b) Poé Naba, formerly the confessor for the wives and pages
687 of the Mogho Naba. His duty, carried out by magical practices,
661 was to denounce those wives or persons guilty of treason or of

644 attempted adultery. This practice (poéré) found many victims,
 687 and its suppression by the French was a real service to the Mossi,
 661 who were formerly murdered for a trifle. An ogling glance at a
 chief's wife was punishable by death. A man who met one of the
 wives of the Mogho Naba on the road was executed along with the
 wife. If one met a napagha [royal wife], he left the path and
 took to the bush. The woman herself would run off and return to the
 road only when she was sure that the man was a long way off.

Such is naturally no longer the case, and the wives of the
 Mogho Naba on their way to the market at [66] Ouagadougou no
 longer expect not to be looked at or even jostled. I hasten to add,
 however, that the Mossi still retain great respect for them and will
 even swallow serious insults, such as tampiri, "bastard," from a
napagha if they are so unlucky as to offend them.

644 (c) Daporé Naba, chief of the section of the free or house
 683 slaves. It was formerly the duty of the Daporé Naba and his fol-
 lowers to massacre any pages or other convicted persons whose
 execution had been ordered by the Mogho Naba.

644 (d) Bend'Naba, chief of the drummers of the Mogho Naba.

(e) Soré Naba (literally, "chief of the path"), the drummer
 who always accompanies the warriors and who, therefore, even in
 time of peace, is allotted a horse.

644 If the enemy appears to be winning during a battle, the Soré
 726 Naba kindles the courage of the warriors of the Mogho Naba and
 constantly asks for a head, m'data zougou. This means that he is
 asking each warrior to forget himself and to think only of victory.
 In order to have a victory, the enemy must suffer such losses that
 they decide either to retreat or to surrender. Thus, the expression
m'data zougou implies ruthless slaughter.

701 (f) Tansoba or Tampsoba, the war chief. The Tansoba of the
 Mogho Naba lives in a small village, Moussa, in the province of
 the Baloum Naba.

701 [67] When there is friction between the Mogho Naba and one
 687 of his vassals and there seems to be no hope of agreement, the
 Mogho Naba sends to the Tansoba for logdo (warriors armed with
 arrows). The Tansoba at once proceeds to Ouagadougou and stops
 at Baoghin: The emperor assembles his ministers and the principal
 dignitaries of his court and says to them: "I never thought that
 chief X, to whom I myself gave the pougla (red fez) would dare to

701 oppose me. I therefore demand that his fez be returned to me."
687 To take away the fez of a naba is to dethrone him and reduce him to the level of his subjects.

The court officials, including the Tansoba, at once send emissaries to the chief at fault, asking him to choose between suicide (some take a poison called sounadré, while others kill themselves with a poisoned arrow) and war with the Mogho Naba.

If the chief is not prepared for such a summons, he kills himself, and the envoys return with the news.

669 If, on the other hand, he declares that he wants pouwega, that
687 is, war and a noble death, he sends back the representatives of the ministers. A few days later, with drums beating and the Tansoba, chief of the army, at its head, the whole warrior band appears before his walls.

The Tansoba sends the Samandé Naba to the chief to ask him to confirm his declaration of war. If the naba still wants war, he usually replies: "Ya yingri bala la ka sakénian."

The Tansoba withdraws, sending word to the chief [68] to expect him back on a stated day (seven or eight days later); this period of time will enable the chief to assemble his warriors also. When the day arrives, it is a merciless battle, a massacre.

727 Often the forces of the Mogho Naba are victorious, and in that event the slaves, livestock, and other property go to those who seized them. Only the corpses belong to the Tansoba.

701 If an arrow, even a poisoned one, wounds the Tansoba, he
571 must under no circumstances pull it out. Indeed, he must often endure thirst and hunger, and it is only when he is at rest in an enclosed place that the arrows are removed from his body. It should

[789] be noted that since the Tansoba's costume is virtually covered with amulets and other charms, he is not very likely to be wounded seriously by an arrow. This is not, of course, to belittle his bravery and composure in the face of danger, since he is expected never to retreat and, if the enemy is victorious, often prefers to kill himself rather than to report a defeat to the Mogho Naba.

644 There are, in addition to the foregoing, a great many petty
naba whose role is not clearly defined and of whom it seems needless to speak.

Customary Payments by the Mossi to their Chiefs

643 To the Mogho Naba. In former times, before the coming of
651 the French, the kombemba (canton chiefs) [69] and the nakomsé
(descendants of Mogho Naba) were all required to come to
Ouagadougou once a year to pay their respects to the Mogho Naba
on this occasion to present gifts to him (cattle, horses, sheep, cowries,
and loads of millet).

For all practical purposes, this amounted to a fixed fee which
varied in amount, of course, with the resources of the contributors
(canton chiefs and nakomsé) and the number of subjects that the
administration entrusted to the leaders.

Although the horses, cattle, and sheep were personally con-
tributed by the kombéré, the cowries and millet were furnished
by their Mossi subjects. The canton chief set the amounts of
cowries and grain due from each village according to the number
of its inhabitants.

The assessment was usually 100 cowries for a married man and
50 for a bachelor (adult). The payment in millet was 10 baskets,
each averaging 40 kilograms.

Likewise, a kind of fee was paid annually to the Djiba Naba,
crown price, in cowries and livestock. This was done to stay in
the good graces of his father, the emperor.

643 Nowadays the canton chiefs (kombemba), who come to
651 Ouagadougou more often than formerly for important feasts and
178 other events, never return to their lands without paying their re-
spects to the Mogho Naba and giving him the traditional gifts
(cowries and livestock). Gifts are now made more often, but they
no longer have [70] the same importance. As a general rule,
certain canton chiefs still require their people to give small
amounts of cowries when they visit Ouagadougou for the celebra-
tion of July 14. Some chiefs, however, either because they fear
penalties from the administration or because they think that their
people are already heavily burdened, prefer to give the little
they have personally acquired by selling produce (cotton, yams,
etc.) or trading.

Some of the vassal chiefs of the Mogho Naba, who, however,
are no longer subject to Ouagadougou since the division of the

643
651 Mossi circle into several administrative districts, still continue to
178 make substantial annual gifts to the Mogho Naba (cowries, cattle, and a considerable amount of grain, millet and rice).

634 Payments Due the Kombemba (canton chiefs). Formerly each
651 canton held one or more ritual feasts each year, and the Mossi subjects, that is, the tengsoba (village elders, notables, and those in comfortable circumstances), regularly made gifts to the canton chief (cowries, goats, sheep, and roosters). The Peulh [Peul] gave cattle.

The canton chiefs also retained a portion of the payment made by the people for the benefit of the Mogho Naba.

[178] At the present time these traditional gifts are still made, but white or light gray roosters are more and more being substituted for livestock. [71]

661 Payments due the Ministers of the Mogho Naba. In order to
431 maintain good relations with the ministers, court officials, and
644 intermediaries between the emperor and his vassals, the canton
634 chiefs in former times used to present unspecified gifts to the high dignitaries at court when they paid their respects to the Mogho Naba. A certain number of cowries was given to the pougtiéma, first wife of the Mogho Naba (500 cowries equals two and a half francs, formerly 50 centimes).

A canton chief who has been called to Ouagadougou for some reason may choose not to call on the emperor, but he is obligated to bring cowries, a sheep, or a rooster to the minister who is head of the province in which his canton is located.

651 Common laws. (a) Regulation of market fees. Before the ar-
443 rival of the French, market fees at Ouagadougou were collected for the benefit of the Mogho Naba by a collector in his employ.

In important villages, fees were collected by Gourounsi [Grunshi] captives on behalf of the canton chiefs (kombemba).

651 (b) Hunting. In former times, before the fields were cleared
224 for seeding, the Mossi used to go out in groups of several villages
634 on hunting drives. Small game (partridges, guinea fowl, hares, etc.) were left to the hunters. On the other hand, a haunch of any quadruped killed (deer, gazelle, coba [a kind of horse antelope], etc.) was reserved for the canton chief.

651 [72] (c) Fishing. Fishing in the larger water holes could take
 226 place only by authorization of the canton chiefs. The day on
 634 which fishing took place was treated as a holiday. All the young
 men in the village and their neighbors, even if the latter did not
 belong to the canton, came out on the day set by the canton chief
 and fished for the benefit of the naba. All large fish were reserved
 for him, and only the small ones were left to the fishermen.

This practice still prevails.

776 Other common laws. Many deities are worshipped by the
 782 Mossi. Groves, fields, mountains, etc., all have their "god."
 661 It often happens that the naba (canton chief), at the behest of the
 soothsayers, offers an animal. This may be a sheep, a goat, or
 even a cow, and it is offered to one or another of the deities,
 either for his personal interests or for those of his people, or per-
 haps to ask for rain. The naba dispatches some sogoné [servitor]
 or samand'kambs [people of the outer courtyard] to one of the
 villages in his canton to find a victim. The animal is taken with-
 out its owner having any right to complain or to ask for compensa-
 tion. Is there not a Mossi saying to the effect, Talagh-gounda
 [538] Naba'gninga the serf raises livestock for the benefit of his naba)?"

For sacrifices prescribed for the Mogho Naba, the animals are
 provided either by the inhabitants of the [73] town of Ouagadougou
 and its environs or by the canton chiefs.

Labor Service Customarily Required of the Mossi on Behalf of their Chiefs

651 Forced labor was used to cultivate the fields of the naba and
 to repair or construct their houses.

647 The Mogho Naba. (a) Cultivation of fields. The duty of
 651 cultivating the fields of the Mogho Naba fell entirely on the Bilbalsé,
 241 the residents of Bilbalogo (section of the Baloum Naba) and on all
 former servitors and descendants of former servitors. The Kam
Naba (chief of the young men), charged with assembling the
 workers, had a crier announce in all the important markets that on
 such-and-such a day the Bilbalsé were to assemble in the emperor's

644 fields. On that day, the Mogho Naba had one or two cows
651 slaughtered and a large quantity of sagbo (millet cakes) prepared
241 for the workers. If the latter, after being assembled two or three
times in the manner indicated above, were not finished with all
the fields, the work was carried on by the samand'kamba (the
people who dwelt in the outer courtyard of the Mogho Naba).

644 The emperor, however, received none of the millet grown in
574 his own fields, which, incidentally, did not have their present
boundaries. This millet was reserved exclusively [74] for use
as food for foreign visitors and for the feeding of horses (1).

1. For the ceremony of threshing this
millet (kawinré), see the special chap-
ter below [Chapter 16].

644 It was the duty of the canton chiefs and the ministers to pro-
651 vide loads of millet for the use of the Mogho Naba and his harem
("harem" should be understood to mean all young or middle-aged
women, but to exclude the elderly women who have to support
themselves and who have their private fields).

644 (b) Repair of the houses of the Mogho Naba. The work of
651 building and repairing the houses actually belonging to the em-
356 peror fell entirely upon the inhabitants of Bilbalogo (section of the
Baloum Naba), Kamsaonghin (section of the chief eunuch), and
Dapoya (section of the slaves of the Mogho Naba).

[343] The outbuildings, wédanga, four round huts with thatched roofs
located outside the emperor's house, served as stables for the
horses given to the Mogho Naba by canton chiefs or other personages
and were built and maintained by three ministers, the Ouidi Naba,
Larrhallé Naba, and Gounga Naba, with the help of the people in
their sections.

The tamping of the floors and clay roofs was done wholly by the
wives of the persons responsible for [75] the construction or repair,
that is, the wives of the ministers and of the inhabitants of their
sections.

Labor service due the province chiefs, ministers of the emperor.

651 (a) Cultivation of fields. The fields belonging to the ministers
645 of the Mogho Naba were cultivated by a system of payments in kind
241 as follows.

651 For the Baloum Naba; the work was done by all the bilbalsé.
645 The Kam Naba set the day for the sekka (gathering), and all the
241 young and able-bodied men were required to report. They received the food they required from the Baloum Naba. The number of work days was not fixed. The sekka might be held once or several times, depending on the acreage.

For the other ministers, the Ouidi Naba, Gounga Naba, and Larhallé Naba, the field work was done by the people in their entourage (that is, the inhabitants of their respective sections) and in the neighboring villages which were formerly under their jurisdiction. Since the formation of the canton of Ouagadougou and its outskirts, the area has been under the exclusive authority of the Baloum Naba (fourth minister of the emperor).

645 If, however, the fields were so extensive that their cultivation
476 could not be taken care of solely by the above system -- the
241 laborers also had to care for their own fields -- the ministers [76] called for volunteers from among the young men in the neighboring villages and paid them with food and drink. This is the sissoaga, a system commonly in use among the Mossi.

645 (b) Construction and repair of houses. As a general rule, repair
651 of the roofs of huts in the establishments of the province chiefs
356 was the duty of the inhabitants of their respective sections and of the neighboring villages under their jurisdiction.

651 The canton chiefs. The cultivation of the fields of the naba
634 and the repair of the huts in their establishments were wholly incumbent
241 on their subjects. Each village had a fixed number of
356 huts to be repaired or roofed; this is known as sough pilli, and it is still in effect annually.

651 Today, perhaps in the interests of tranquillity, canton chiefs require labor service in their fields only from their sogoné and samand'kamba and sometimes even resort to the sissoaga.

The local administration, with respect for local customs, has the policy of organizing the system in a way that, in our opinion, will safeguard the interests of the natives, overburdened due to the negligence of the province chiefs, and at the same time will enhance the prestige of the Mossi chiefs.

653 The naba is not entitled to any other labor services. The building of dams to provide water for the villages cannot be

653 considered forced labor since this work is done in the common interest.

[77]

Installation of a Market

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782 As in many other circumstances, the Mossi first consult soothsayers when they desire to establish a market. The Moaga [singular of Mossi] is convinced that invisible spirits ~~are~~ everywhere, behind his house, under the trees, in the fields and groves, and even in uninhabited places, so above all he is anxious to obtain the good will of these beings whose anger is fearful. It is, therefore, only after consulting several soothsayers, who use various types of divination (with cowries, stones, sand, etc.), that the village chief has chickens and livestock sacrificed on the site where he wishes to set up the new market. The naba chooses two or three candidates from among his followers, and the soothsayers are required to indicate which of these has the best prospect of good fortune and a promising future. This person will be the one who performs the sacrifice. The victims are furnished, in theory, by the village or canton chief, unless he decides to call on the populace. In this case, a small assessment is made on some of the notables, and the proceeds are used to buy chickens, a goat, or a sheep.

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782 In any event, the canton chief is not permitted to appropriate the animals in the villages or sections under his jurisdiction as would be done in the case of sacrifices offered for the general welfare of the country.

The individual chosen by the bagba [soothsayers] presents himself at the site, accompanied by a more or less [78] impressive crowd, depending on the importance of the village. The women bring fritters and other provisions.

The following sacramental words are pronounced: "Ya sida Ting' Naba yeta nan lougoul dagh, Naba zidwendé Bad kom deghin kon zigh tinghin damba, tib kon yaramba, tib regh kon saramba, tiya gnimassem lad ratta, tib regh lass zim-yellé, tiya nogoam la tigue koadá soaba lad zoíta." A literal translation follows. "This is true, the canton chief wishes to install a market on this spot. Oh God, the Sun, here are water and animals for zigh'tinghin damba (people who died childless), for grandparents and ancestors. We ask

366 for good fortune and health. Prevent all bloodshed in this market.
 782 We also fear those who are quarrelsome and those who talk too much, those who provoke disorder." The chicken is the first victim to be sacrificed, and if the offering is accepted, it must have first fallen on its back and only then turned over face downward (this means that the gods of the place will protect the naba and the persons who will frequent the market). Next the goat or sheep is killed.

The new market is opened immediately after the sacrifice. Those present buy the women's fritters. Ordinarily, Mossi markets are held every three days. The news travels rapidly that such-and-such a village has a market, and thus the business of the market gradually grows.

[443] Collection of fees. It is only later on, one or even two years after the installation of his new market and when [79] it is successful, that the canton chief appoints a yaguinga (grandson, or, more accurately in native terms, a sister's son (nephew) or son's son (grandson), of the naba or of a member of his family) or a Gourounsi captive to act as collector of market fees. (We shall list below the various fees for a place in the market as they were collected for the benefit of the naba before the arrival of the French.)

366 Transfer of the market. Upon the death of a naba (the emperor, a vassal chief, or even the chief of the village where the market is held), the market is temporarily set up in another place. In large towns, such as Ouagadougou, for example, there may be as many markets as there are sections. These temporary markets are called kim'dagha (market of the kimsé, that is, of the deceased).

366 When a new naba has been named, the market is moved back
 782 to its former site and the reinstallation calls for new sacrifices of fowl and livestock. That was why in 1897, when the market at Ouagadougou was being re-established, the emperor asked the captain who was in command of the post to provide a cow to be sacrificed along with a sheep and a rooster which he himself provided.

366 Likewise, whenever a hyena has run through the market (its
 825 presence is discovered either by the tracks left by the animal or by
 787 consulting the soothsayers), just as happens when a naba dies, the market must be moved elsewhere for a few days. It is believed that if [80] a brawl should occur after a hyena had passed through the market, there would certainly be a death.

Scale of Market Fees Collected by the Mogho Naba and the Canton
Chiefs Before the French Occupation

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651 At Ouagadougou two collectors had the duty of gathering market fees.

The Kos Naba (from kossé "to sell," and naba, "chief") collected a tax on every animal slaughtered whose meat was sold at the market.

The Ragh' Naba (from ragha, "market," and naba, "chief") collected fees on all other produce.

The fees were as follows.

Captives. 1,000 cowries per captive sold; fee paid by the seller.

Large animals. (a) Oxen, 250 cowries per ox slaughtered; cows, 250 cowries per cow slaughtered. (In addition, the hump of every head of cattle slaughtered was taken for the Mogho Naba and delivered to him that evening.)

(b) Donkeys: 200 cowries per donkey sold, paid by the seller.

(c) Horses: no tax was collected. Horses, being luxury animals and sought only by chiefs and a few [81] well-to-do persons (rakangba) were not put up for sale at the market.

Small animals. No special tax on sheep, goats, etc.

Dam (dolo, beer). No tax. The seller was supposed to present a gourd or canari of beer to the chief of her section (the emperor's minister) whenever she made some. This was called the lenga, that is, a "taste." This practice no doubt explains the lack of any tax on the beer merchants.

Cotton strips. Taxes graded from 20 to 100 cowries according to the size of the rolls of cloth.

Cotton. First collected in kind and then a tax of 20 cowries paid after the sale.

Grains and fats. Small millets, sorghum, rice, peanuts, millet that is sprouted to be used for beer, beans, and peas: for these kinds of produce, the Ragh' Naba and his assistants had special measuring devices, bowls of a sort, made of wood and used to collect payments in kind. All of the grains, including the millet used to make beer, were stored by the Ragh' Naba in granaries for disposal by the emperor.

443 Ready-made clothing, beads. No tax collected.
 651 [82] Soumbala (kalgo in Mossi) [locust beans pressed into balls]. Payment in kind (one ball per seller).
 Other spices. No fee paid.
Karite [shea] butter. Collected with a soutga (a kind of ladle), karite butter was used almost exclusively for the horses of the Mogho Naba.

Fritters and other cooked foods. Actually no fee was called for on these products, but the collectors demanded the payment of a tax in kind to provide their own food or that of the samand'kamba (servitors of the outer courtyard).

Salt. 300 cowries for each load (ox or donkey).

Hoes, axes. Each merchant provided a daba or an axe for work in the field of the naba. Nothing was collected at the subsequent market if all of the tools had not been sold in one day.

[306] Jewelry. No tax was collected. The jewelers who made bracelets and other jewels for the wives of the naba, as well as various harness parts, were exempt from all taxes.

Other markets. Fees collected for the benefit of the canton chiefs were about the same as [83] those paid at the market of Ouagadougou. In small markets, however, payments were made in kind. The edible products made up the food of the collectors, Gourounsi captives for the most part, who were prevented by their social status from having wives and so had no one to prepare food for them.

Chapter 5

Slavery Among the Mossi

567 We shall endeavor in the following lines to describe slavery as it existed among the Mossi before the French occupation.

567 We know that slavery has existed for a very long time in the
 173 land of the Mogho Naba, but, because of the total lack of dates in Mossi history -- handed down from generation to generation by the griot [heralds, drummers] of the naba -- it is difficult to determine when it was first introduced.

567 It is known, however, that the first slaves of the Mossi were all of Boussanga [Busansi] origin. The canton of Garango in what is

567 now the circle of Tenkodogo constituted a reservoir (figuratively called lambagré, "cotton reserve") from which the warriors and vassals of the emperor brought back hundreds of young slaves. This was because Garango recognized no authority; it was dependent neither on the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou nor on the king of Tenkodogo. Tradition has it that the warriors of the Mossi chiefs were always surprising the people of Garango on market days. The memory of these raids is why, even today the markets at Garango [365] are open only from six in the morning until noon.

[644] The Mossi considered themselves to be free men, and no one, [85] not even naba, had the right to reduce a Moaga subject to slavery. The facial tattoos made it easy to distinguish the Moaga [304] from foreigners.

567 Since there were few contacts between neighboring villages, it was difficult even for highwaymen to sell young people from near-
674 by areas. This does not mean that there were not, all the same, captives of Mossi origin. Bandits rode, for instance, from Ouagadougou to Boussouma. They always carried large leather [442] sacks tied to their saddles and into them thrust children and women who were taken by surprise while gathering fruit in the bush. Such captives were always sold far from their home villages. Naturally such practices were severely dealt with by the naba. Naba Wobgo drove the canton chief of Bilgotenga, Warongo, from his territory because he enslaved Mossi people. Warongo was forced to take refuge in Yatenga and returned home only after the coming of the French.

567 Some of the slaves brought back from Garango were kept by the emperor, and the rest were distributed among the warriors. Up to that time no one thought of using them for anything but field work and domestic labor.

It was Naba Baongo, the twenty-sixth successor of Oubri, who first thought of selling the slaves. He said: "Id kossi bazas kamba tib boude nan wa saï" (literally, "let us sell these slave dogs; perhaps, one day, [86] there will be no more of them"). It is as if the emperor had foreseen the suppression of slavery and the emancipation of the slaves.

Today one seldom encounters former Boussanga slaves. They have no doubt returned to their villages since the arrival of the [304] French. Their descendants (house slaves, dogyiri) now wear the same facial tattoos as the Mossi.

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The only slaves who have remained faithful to their masters or, more exactly, who have preferred to remain in Mossi territory after their emancipation, are nearly all Gourounsi.

The Gourounsi Captives

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Sonrhaf [Songhai] forces led by Alpha Hafnon, Gazeré, and Babato used to raid Gourounsi country. They reduced a large number of Gourounsi to slavery, immediately making soldiers of the more enterprising among them to fight against their own people and selling or exchanging the rest for horses. Mossi country has always had a large supply of horses, so the Mossi used to go to Léo to trade their horses for slaves or simply to trade their slaves to the Sonrhaf for cowries.

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The Sonrhaf chiefs maintained good relations with the emperor of the Mossi, Naba Sanum. That is why they spared the Gourounsi village chiefs who had taken refuge with the Mogho Naba.

Boukary-koutou, the future Naba Wobgo, enjoyed the [87] regard and friendship of the Sonrhaf since he aided them in their wars against the Gourounsi in exchange for an ample share of the booty and slaves. We have shown that the large number of Gourounsi whom he brought with him to Ouagadougou contributed mightily to his being named emperor of the Mossi.

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During the reigns of Naba Koutou, Sanum, and Wobgo, there were special slave markets attached to the regular markets at Ouagadougou and other large centers. A fee of 1,000 cowries was collected for the benefit of the naba for each captive sold, regardless of sex.

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When owners desired to sell a slave, they first shaved his head, and it was only after the hair had begun to grow again that he was taken to market. The cutting of the hair derives from a superstition among the Mossi.

Depending on where the hair starts to grow, whether well back on the head, at the forehead, or near the ears, the interpretation varies as to how the slave is to be regarded: as a dangerous being; as a lucky or unlucky influence on the family owning him.

We shall not now go into details since such beliefs will be discussed in a special section.

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The several categories of captives are as follows.

1. The Yemdaogo, all of whom are of foreign origin (Boussanga and Gourounsi) and either bought or captured during a war.
2. The daporé or dapobi (house slaves) who are the descendants of slaves. [88]
3. The bengaré, former slaves of the Peulh, who have abandoned their masters and put themselves under the sole authority of the Mogho Naba.
4. The Kamboiensé.

The Various Types of Slaves

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Daporé ("living behind the house"). (a) The daporé belonging to the Mogho Naba. At Ouagadougou there is a section called Dapoya, and its inhabitants are called Dapobi. They are wrongly considered (even by themselves) to be captives. Of Kibissi origin (we have noted that the Kibissi, the Ninissi, and the Gourounsi were the original inhabitants of the present Mossi area), they came of their own volition to Obri-Bangrenaba (Naba Oubri's chief of the bangré slaves), and he presented them to the emperor. It has been impossible to find out who was reigning when they arrived. The Mogho Naba first installed them at Wavoussé and later behind his house where they acted as guards and also were entrusted with important responsibilities.

[582]

These are voluntary captives. They are therefore not yemsé in the usual sense of the word, since they were neither bought nor sold, and the emperor did not mistreat them, although he did not grant them, as foreigners, the same rights as those possessed by his subjects. The dapobi could not marry Mossi girls. They were obliged to marry slaves, and that is perhaps why they are considered slaves themselves. The children of these marriages, called [89] dogyiri ("born in the house") make up the "house slave" class.

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(b) Daporé of the Kamsaoughin and daporé of the canton chiefs. In addition to the foreign dapobi just mentioned, there are true dapobi who were either captured in battle or bought. The former are slaves of the Mogho Naba and are entrusted to the care of the Kamsaougho Naba, chief eunuch, who is responsible for guarding

567 part of the emperor's harem. The dapobi belonging to the canton chiefs, belonging to the kombemba, are of the same origin. While the Mogho Naba could not sell the dapobi of Kibissi origin, the emperor and the canton chiefs could do as they liked with the true dapobi. They were sold for the most trifling faults and their wives and children were either sent away with them or turned over to other deserving captives.

Slaves of the Crown. (a) The bangaré. These are Peulh captives who have gradually cast off the authority of their masters and who have submitted voluntarily to the authority of the Mogho Naba.

A herd of cattle is called nab'bangaré, and it seems likely that the word bangaré, "herd," to designate this type of slave came from that source. However, the bangaré are not solely former Peulh slaves since a free individual who has committed a serious crime in his [90] native village and fears reprisal comes to join the "herd."

Once presented to the Mogho Naba, they were henceforth considered slaves and, as such, immune from prosecution.

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621 The principal bangaré villages, generally known as "independent villages," are: Kalbo (province of Gounga); Manghin, Zaanga (canton of Zоргongo); Zaan'pighin, Payaobtinga (canton of Boudry); Nabasnoghin (canton of Nedogo); Bangar'Nabilin (canton of Zorgo); Gandaogo (canton of Zoungou); Boumintoré, Sidtenga, Mandié, Bougoumbarga, etc.

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681 The emperor could supply himself from these "herds" whenever the need arose. Any bangaré who had committed serious crimes or who had been denounced as dangerous individuals who spread disorder in the villages or committed robbery were castrated and made into eunuchs or sold by order of the emperor.

1582 The bangaré intermarry since no free Mossi father would give them a daughter in marriage. This is solely due to the fact that if the emperor decided to sell a bangaré, his family would share the same fate. The father of the wife would not intervene in such a case, because this might be dangerous for him. So it is easily understandable that, under these circumstances, no father would seek such a match.

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622 Bangaré chiefs. The chiefs of bangaré villages [91] are appointed by the Mogho Naba. The villages themselves are free of any

567 control by the canton chiefs in whose territories they are located.
622 The inhabitants pay nothing to the kombéré nor can the chief require any labor service in his fields or for the upkeep of his houses. They recognize only the Mogho Naba as chief.

567 Kamboinsé. True Kamboinsé are not Mossi; they came from the west during the reign of Naba Waraga (nineteenth successor of Oubri). Like the dapobi of the Dapoya section they came with guns (their chief even had a [ceremonial] stool) to put themselves under the authority of the Mogho Naba. Their chief, Gambaré by name, told the emperor that they had come to offer themselves as soldiers and slaves to help him pacify his territory. The Kamboinsé occupy a section of the town behind the Catholic mission on the right side of the road to Pô.

When the emperor's native gunners found themselves faced with competition from foreigners, they countered by appointing their own chief who took the title of Kamboin Naba. They are, however, different from the true Kamboinsé, and they live a dozen or so kilometers from Ouagadougou in the villages of Kamboinsé and Wobrigré.

While the first-mentioned Kamboinsé are voluntary slaves, the others are true slaves captured in war or bought by the emperor.

567 [92] Use of slaves as security for debt. Captives might be
426 used to settle debts. It should be noted that the right to own slaves was not limited to the emperor and his vassals. Any prosperous Moaga (dakangré) might own them.

[612] If the head of a household died leaving debts, the heirs could sell a few slaves to pay off the obligation. If, however, the creditor preferred to have the slaves, the latter were put up for appraisal just as though they were livestock.

In the same way, slaves could be traded for horses, garments, or even loads of kola nuts.

567 If slaves were maltreated by their owners, providing that the latter were not of the nobility, they could put themselves under the protection of the naba. In that event they ceased to belong to their former owners. On the other hand, if a Moaga took it upon himself to kill a slave, he at once had to pay a fine of 100,000 cowries to his canton chief as a blood price.

567 Ordinarily, captives who were brought back from the wars were
439 at once sold to the Haoussa [Hausa] or Yarcé [Yarse] who traded

567 them for kola nuts with the Achanti [Ashanti] or for loaves of salt
 439 at Timbuktu. Although they were always transported by roundabout
 routes to prevent them from finding their way back to their homes,
 still some of them always managed to escape.

492 The naba used the young yemdado as oroné or grooms, and
 567 they would often [93] take the young and attractive women
 (yempolsé) as wives.

641 The sale of free men. Neither the emperor of the Mossi nor
 681 his vassals sold their subjects. Individuals who were regarded as
 dangerous were simply put to death unless they took refuge in a
bangaré to avoid being executed, as has been noted above. Some
 were sent to the emperor to be made into eunuchs.

304 The facial tattoos worn by the Mossi clearly distinguished them
 567 from neighboring peoples. However, if by accident or because of
 689 need a naba sold a free man and the latter was claimed by his rela-
 tives, the chief was required to buy back the slave or to indemnify
 his family. We have described above how a canton chief was
 exiled by the emperor for having sold free Mossi.

583 Concealed selling of women and children. In the chapter on
 562 marriage customs among the Mossi we shall show that a native
 567 Moaga did not demand a bride price because he did not want to feel that
 he was selling his daughter. There is no doubt that this rule has ex-
 ceptions. Indeed, we shall show that the failure to pay a debt, a bout
 of drunkenness, or a favor received might suffice to mortgage the
 future of a daughter, even though at the time she might be a small
 child and quite unaware of her fate. In any event, there would be
 no question of her expressing any opinion, since her wishes are never
 taken into account. During periods of famine -- which have been
 [73] occurring almost [94] regularly for some years -- a small basket of
 millet is enough to make a father promise his daughter. In the same
 way, we regret to say, a great many girls are promised in exchange
 for trifling sums at the time the poll tax is paid.

567 Rights of slaves. Since he is regarded as an inferior being,
 the yemdaogo (slave) has no well-defined rights. He is required to
 perform all kinds of domestic work and must give unquestioning
 obedience to his master and the master's family. Besides his essen-
 tial duties, however, he is permitted to do some farming for himself,
 practice some trade, or to raise cattle, with the proceeds constituting

567 his personal fortune. The management of any such property is left entirely to him. If the master becomes indebted [to the slave], he is required to pay the debt within a fixed time limit.

Emancipation from slavery. As was indicated in the foregoing paragraph, it was possible for a slave to amass property through his own efforts. He might then free himself by paying his master 100,000 cowries. He then might either return to his native village or settle in his master's village. There have been slaves who not only freed themselves in this way, but also became slave owners in their turn.

If, however, slaves marry female slaves given to them by their masters and become fathers of families, they do not usually leave their masters. [95] They acquire a certain standing and are counted as members of the family. It is understood that they do not have the right to dispose of their children since the latter are dogyiri (house slaves).

465 Various types of unpaid work. Aside from the labor and other obligations required of all Mossi subjects for their naba -- we have described the forced labor in a previous chapter -- it may be said that, in general, no work is required without pay, even from slaves. In an area that is predominantly agricultural there can be no question of payment in money as would be the case in private or official enterprises where contracts specify the obligations of an employer to his employees. On the purely native level, the employer is obligated only to feed the workers.

In sum, what are the duties of a Moaga?

1. Cultivation of the family fields.
2. Construction and repair of huts and roofs.
3. Private work: basketry, shoemaking, weaving cotton strips, pottery, sewing, etc.

592 The head of the household is required to feed the workers who
476 cultivate the family plots or repair the huts. In a later chapter we shall see that when the [96] members of a family could not complete a task without help, they called on other young men in the village. In that case, animals were slaughtered, dolo (millet beer) was brewed, and sagho (millet mush) or benga (beans) was prepared.

567 On the other hand, it should be stated that when yemdago were used for hard labor, they were very well fed and were even given double rations.

567 Were slaves part of an estate? Among the Mossi, the wives
 428 are part of an estate on the same footing as the rest of the property
 562 of the deceased. The same thing applies to the captives (yemsé)
 and dogyiri (house slaves) who constitute and integral part of the
 estate. They constitute a patrimony to be handed down from
 father to son in accordance with the customary order of succession.
 They remain the exclusive property of the legitimate heir and are
 not distributed as are the wives of the deceased.

[97] Chapter 6

Djiba Naba, Crown Prince of the Mossi Empire

Preliminary Remarks

644 In writing on this subject we have not tried to ascertain whether
 the canton of Djiba was once independent or whether it was under
 the direct authority of the Mogho Naba.

At the outbreak of the World War in 1914 the Djiba Naba, a
 brother of the present emperor, Naba Kom, was drafted into the
 army, and another brother had to be appointed to take his place.
 The latter's administration was in many ways unsatisfactory, so
 when the Djiba Naba, on his return from the front, had to be sent
 to Dououlougou to replace a deceased son of Naba Wobgo, the Mogho
 Naba retained direct authority over the canton of Djiba. Meanwhile,
 his eldest son had returned from Tunis and had been officially named
 the chief of Djiba, but he had had to leave again for military service
 at Salonika. Thus, it can be said that even before the canton of
 Djiba had been made the prerogative of the eldest son of Naba
 Zombré, it had already been under the latter's authority.

It was during the reign of Naba Zombré, twenty-third Mogho
 Naba, that the eldest son of the emperor was given jurisdiction over
 the canton of Djiba. Naba Zombré, after Naba Niandeffo, had one
 of the longest reigns in the history of the country. He actually ruled
 for sixty years.

643 [98] An old tradition requires an emperor who has ruled for
 782 thirty years to go to Oubritenga to celebrate zom'bika (literally,

643 "to mount the bika").

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Bika. When the emperor goes to Oubritenga, a large pit is dug in which all sorts of provisions are placed and, finally, a living man. Poles cover the opening of the tomb where the suffocated man lies, and the whole thing is covered with earth. A throne (guéré) is placed on the grave, and it is there that the emperor -- with little ceremony -- receives the faithful during his stay at Oubritenga. In carrying out this practice, the emperor is considered as having died and then come to life again. Hence, when he returns to Ouagadougou, after an absence which may last for years, he is welcomed by the populace with the greatest enthusiasm, and he must carry out all sorts of customary obligations just as he did at the beginning of his reign.

This custom is of course bound to disappear. In any event, if it were still an obligatory ceremony today, the man would no doubt be replaced by a rooster.

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Naba Zombré went to Oubritenga to mount the bika and remained there for three years. His eldest son acted for him at Ouagadougou and in the process acquired some fame and the esteem of the populace.

When his father returned, it was obviously necessary to bestow upon this prince, who had already tasted the "joys" of ruling, and developed a real talent for command, a post of real distinction. Djiba was chosen. From that day on, [99] as soon as the eldest son of the Mogho Naba reaches the age of discretion, he is appointed Djiba Naba. It is thus understandable that Naba Kom, enthroned at an early age, was much disturbed when two of his sons were sent to Senegal and then to Tunisia.

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The appointment of the Djiba Naba differs very little from that of other canton chiefs, but this naba has certain obligations which will be discussed below.

Before Appointment

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Before his appointment, the crown prince of the Mossi empire first proceeds to the village of Zango where he must remain for a week. He must bring with him a sheep, a white rooster, and a cow which are to be given to the village chief for use in a sacrifice to

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782 tenpelem (the earth) in order that he may have health, happiness, etc. In addition, he provides a bar of salt which is to be shared among the old women.

As he passes through Nonsin, he gives a sheep, a white rooster, and some salt for a similar sacrifice.

644 On the seventh day he returns to Ouagadougou and stops at Bilbalogo, the home of the Kam Naba (chief of the young men), whose guest he becomes. The Mogho Naba informs his ministers, and the day is set for the appointment.

The customary formalities are nearly identical with those required for the appointment of canton chiefs (kombemba).

[100] After Appointment

On the day following his appointment, the Djiba Naba calls upon his father. A cushion (nagpouré) is placed near a shed in the emperor's courtyard at the foot of a special stake called the "zandaogo of the Djiba Naba." The Djiba Naba becomes the guest of the Gounga Naba, in whose section he will henceforth stay whenever he comes to Ouagadougou. (At the present time, because of the enmity between the emperor and his brothers, the Djiba Naba stays at Kamsaoghin [section of the Kamsaogho Naba], not far from his father's house.)

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554 He then has to call upon his father's ministers, and precedence requires him to visit the Ouidi Naba, the prime minister, first. As soon as the latter is notified of the arrival of the Djiba Naba, he offers him a sheep, some dam (beer) and some kola nuts.

Then the crown prince goes to the Larhallé Naba, who is required to present him with the same gifts, and thence to the Kamsogo Naba, chief eunuch, where the same honors are rendered to him and where he is also given a sheep, beer, and kola nuts.

He next calls upon the Gounga Naba, the Poé Naba, the Samande Naba and, finally, the Baloun Naba, from whom he receives many gifts.

On the third day he completes his visits by calling upon the imam who represents Islam at Ouagadougou. There he is offered water containing [millet] flour and honey, as well as kola nuts.

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576 [101] It is to be noted that a gourdful of this water with millet flour on which a bit of karite butter is floating is a customary courtesy offering among the Mossi. It is most improper to greet or to receive a stranger by offering him plain water.

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782 On the fourth or fifth day the Djiba Naba proceeds to Zoanghna (a village located two or three kilometers behind the government buildings) and there hands over a sheep and a cow to serve as offerings to the sacred amulets of the ancestors and to protect him from evil spirits and wicked people. He does not spend the night in this village but returns home immediately after the sacrifice.

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788 Several days later the decision is made to install the new naba in his domain. A large number of soroné, drummers, and followers accompany him on what amounts to a kind of obligatory pilgrimage which we shall describe briefly.

The following itinerary is customary.

First, the Djiba Naba goes to Badnogo where he spends the night. The next day he goes on to Samba where he is offered water with flour in it, and for his part, he gives salt to be shared among the old women of the village.

887 One may ask why salt is given to the old women and not to the other people. The Mossi call old women nough' pouk ramba, that is, those who, when blessing you, clasp their hands so as to make a higher power hear and grant their prayers.

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431 [102] On the following day he proceeds to Tensobitenga where he remains for three days. Beer is prepared for him; he is given a cow for his followers and a wife for himself. At Nakamtenga, his next stop, the village chief welcomes him with a sheep and many baskets and bowls of sagbo (millet mush).

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788 He does not remain here for the night but instead goes on to Koubri. This is the village where eunuchs formerly suffered the cruel operation of castration (1). The canton chief meets him, leads

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1. Eunuchs. Bandits, thieves, murderers, and slaves or soroné (servitors) convicted of adultery with women of the nobility were the only ones sent to Koubri, a canton in the circle of Ouagadougou, to be castrated. This operation involved only the removal

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of the testicles, until the day when a eunuch managed, no one knows how, to take advantage of some of the women he was supposed to be guarding. From then on it was deemed necessary to remove the penis completely, and a copper cartridge was inserted for purposes of urination.

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As soon as the person fainted after undergoing the operation, a drink was concocted whose ingredients are unknown. When he revived, he was so thirsty that he downed the drink in a single gulp. It is said that the drug stupefied the eunuch to such a degree that he would be incapable of taking vengeance even if he had any weapons at hand.

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It was only after he had completely recovered that the victim was sent to the Mogho Naba. The latter assigned him the duty of guarding a harem or a royal tomb.

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him to his house, seats him by his side, and announces to the populace that he has just been visited by his son (Koubri Naba is a descendant of the Mogho Naba).

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He then offers the crown prince a cow and a great deal of [103] beer, and then, before he leaves, the Djiba Naba has free access to the chief's household where he takes as a wife the first nubile girl he encounters. The stay at Koubri traditionally lasted for seven days, but it could be shortened to two or three in view of the great expense involved in entertaining a prince of such high rank, especially at the present time when the canton chiefs no longer enjoy their former prestige.

The Djiba Naba continues on his way to Kombissiri where he is the guest of the canton chief. For a week, in addition to his food which must, of course, be copious and abundant quantities of beer, the crown prince also receives a cow, a sheep, and, before his departure for Doulougou, a wife.

[I.e. canton chief - Analyst]

644 The chief of the canton of Doulougou, where the prince is a
 788 guest for another week, also gives him beer, a sheep, a cow, a
 431 robe, and, finally, a wife.

At Bagamini, where he goes next, he receives from the canton chief a cow, a wife, a quiver, and arrows, presented with these significant words: "Ad locko la pema taon widi, laf ra taon neb'yé ti ya f'ba yemsé" (literally, "Take these arrows to shoot against horses and not against men, for the latter are your father's slaves and the country also belongs to him and therefore to you").

Seven days later he leaves Bagamini and goes to Ipelsé where he receives the same warm welcome. On leaving, he will take with him a cow and a wife.

He likewise remains at Ipelsé for seven days. Passing through Bedgo in the domain of the Peulh chief, the Djiba Naba chooses the finest [104] bull from the herd of cattle which must be presented to him. He likewise takes a girl from the chief's household who becomes his property. He then goes on to Guirga where he is guest of the canton chief for a whole week. On his departure he receives a cow, a robe, and a wife from the chief.

The inhabitants of the village of Kakamsé, through which the Djiba Naba merely passes, bring him quantities of millet cakes (sagbo) and a gift of their choice (a sheep, a goat, a cow, cowries, beer, etc.).

The crown prince continues on to Kondrin and remains there for three days. In addition to sagbo and dam, the chief of Kondrin is required to offer him a cow and a wife before his departure.

From there he proceeds to Béré where the chief, called Rimbissi Kasma (the oldest descendant of the Mogho Naba), gives the Djiba Naba a cow, a robe, and a wife and acts as his host for a week.

644 During the night of the seventh day, the notables of the
 788 canton of Djiba come to Béré to look for the naba. He allows him-
 824 self to be led away, accompanied by only a single servitor and a groom. The rest of the escort from Ouagadougou remains behind and follows him the next morning (1).

1. Why this departure at night and seeming escape? On the route leading into his

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dominion, the Djiba Naba must pass under a tree whose branches he should be able to touch since he is on horseback. His whole future depends upon his doing so. It is from this day forward that the prince will have a long life and will succeed his father. It is believed that the tree has magical powers and that its branches will withdraw of their own accord as the prince passes by it, even though he is the emperor's eldest son, he is not the successor designated by Wendé (God).

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[105] In advance of his coming, care has been taken to find a nice dwelling suitable to house a prince who is the emperor's eldest son. With this in view, an establishment has been chosen which is well built and fairly large, one belonging to a dakangré (prosperous man), and His Highness is conducted to it. As soon as the Djiba Naba has dismounted, his involuntary host must leave his home and take shelter with one of his neighbors. He takes great care to gather all his property, money (liquidi) and wives, into one part of the house; the rest henceforth belongs to the naba. Indeed, it is not long before the establishment is enlarged and some of the huts demolished to make way for more sumptuous buildings.

As soon as the prince is installed, the displaced host receives some gifts and wives as a kind of indemnity for loss. A suitable house is built for him a few hundred meters away.

For several days, celebrations are the rule throughout the canton of Djiba. All the notables and village chiefs, including neighboring canton chiefs who have not had the honor of receiving the prince, come to pay their respects to the new naba and to bring him large gifts.

The escort from Ouagadougou is then sent back [106] with many gifts. The most important nayirdamba [court dignitaries] receive wives and clothing.

Besides the wives the Djiba Naba may have had before his appointment, it is to be noted that he collected quite a harem

644 during his peregrinations. He will bestow some of these on his followers
788 and keep the prettiest for himself.

431 In the old days, the Boulsa Naba, Boussouma Naba, Konkisitenga Naba, and all the others who were, so to speak, independent "rulers" of their lands never brought annual tribute to the Mogho Naba without sending gifts to his eldest son at Djiba.

In the same way, the canton chiefs were expected to make the same annual gifts to the Djiba Naba as to his father.

644 It should also be noted that chiefs who had quarreled with the
696 Mogho Naba and were in danger of being executed could readily obtain pardons by the expedient of buying the friendship of the Djiba Naba. The emperor, after all, was reluctant to distress his son by putting to death one of his intimates.

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Chapter 7

The Mossi Salute. Respect due the Home of a Naba.

The Cap. Precedence among Chiefs.

A Legend Concerning the Origins of Mossi Chieftdom.

Salutation of the Naba (Nab Pousgho)

644 The kombemba (canton chiefs) and nayirdamba (ministers and other court dignitaries), when calling upon the Mogho Naba, are required to remove their cap when they reach the threshold. They hand it to their soromé (servitors) or followers. If they did not come on horseback, they must give their néoda (shoes) to a page and walk barefoot. In a word, they remove anything which might impede the execution of the very complicated Mossi salute.

The following passages concerning the Mossi salute are taken from Father Mangin.

Mossi Salute

644 "The Moaga puts down everything, load, hat, cap, and sword,
576 removes his shoes, and sits on the ground. He folds his legs slightly and bends the upper part of his body forward. The elbows rest on the ground, spread as far apart as possible. The forearms, folded

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576 in front of the chest, and the half-closed hands with thumbs raised together strike [108] the ground three or four times. Then the Mossi raises his body a little and rubs the palms of his hands together. He never looks at the face of the person he is saluting, but keeps his eyes slightly lowered. It is truly a very humiliating posture, especially when the chief who is being saluted remains standing or on horseback, towering above his subordinate and barely according him a glance.

"The women, instead of striking the ground with their forearms, hit it with the elbows and raise their open hands, fingers extended, to shoulder height.

"The grand salute, (1) very rarely used, consists of turning

1. Father Mangin neglected to mention that this salute is used only when the chief or other personage has given a wife, a robe, or some other gift to the person who is saluting him. Furthermore, those present cover their foreheads with dust.

around after the ordinary salute has been completed, taking some dust in both hands, spreading it on the forehead, and then saluting once more.

576 "When two natives who know each other meet along the way, the younger of the two squats first and begins the salute, which the other acknowledges by squatting in turn. If they are carrying loads, they set them down before saluting. They are never in a hurry. Servants and women, when they walk before a chief, bow slightly and join their hands in front of the chest. Though complicated, the Mossi salute is rendered easily and gracefully by the natives; they are used to it from an early [109] age and never perform it in the clumsy and awkward manner which is theirs when they attempt to imitate the military salute."

Respect Due the Home of the Naba

534 The kombéré is absolute master of his territory. His subjects must show him the same deference as he himself shows to the Mogho Naba.

However, even though he is not a noble, a minister of the emperor need not remove his cap to respond to the salute of a kombéré. On the contrary, the latter is required to humble himself, to give way before him just as he would before the Mogho Naba.

644 The nabiga (son of a naba), nakomsé (descendants of naba) and, still more, an ordinary Moaga are all categorically forbidden to wear their shoes or their caps at the court of the naba. The only exception to the rule is when the person is a Moslem convert, but even then he always leaves his shoes at the door. He may, however, wear his cap or turban. Shoes and headgear may be put on again only after the subject is 300 meters from the house of the naba. Sometimes, in places where custom is rigorously enforced, the person must be out of sight.

687 Any infraction of these rules was punished severely by the lash and by confiscation of property by the samand'kamba of the naba [110] when the offender was not of the nobility, that is, was neither nabiga nor nakombga.

291 It is interesting to note that wearing the fez, originally one of the badges of chiefdom, was forbidden to the nabiga and all the more to the talga (ordinary Moaga). Today it is commonly worn by men and youths since European traders and shops have made common an article which was once very rare.

576 Shaking hands. One seldom sees a naba extend his hand to one of his subjects or, more especially, to his brothers or fellow nobles (nakomsé).
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754 There are two reasons for this prohibition: 1) the naba is supposed to maintain a certain distance between himself and his subjects, a normal practice; and 2) a superstitious belief has it that persons harboring evil intentions toward the chief put magic powders on their hands to cause swellings which may develop into real abscesses.

576 Thus, although the Mogho Naba would not in the least object
643 to shaking hands with a Bambara or a Djerma, he would be astonished if a native Moaga -- even an official -- should offer his hand.

573 As soon as the children of a naba have reached the age of discretion, they may no longer play with their "papa," even less
576 shake hands with him. They must henceforth follow the general rule which requires the Mossi salute, kantissé.

576 [111] Nowadays naba (kombemba) and nayiridamba (ministers
602 of the emperor) understand the uselessness of such signs of distrust. Therefore, even though they continue to be less familiar with their relatives (brothers, uncles, and sons -- whom they regard as rivals), they willingly offer their hands to Mossi of any standing and to foreigners.

644 Reception by the naba. 1) Up to the present time and despite some thirty-five years of French occupation, the way one is received at the court of the emperor, which, of course, befalls his servitors, has altered very little. Natives who are now officials in the administration and in business enterprises are still treated on the same footing as their less highly placed compatriots. Not only are they required to perform the kantissé (Mossi salute) as described by Father Mangin, but also afterwards they must sit on the ground, a position that is difficult in European clothes. Foreigners (Bambara, [648] Djerma, even Gourounsi) are offered seats because the oroné do not regard them as fellow countrymen.

645 2) By the ministers. At the present time all the emperor's
576 ministers have comfortable houses and splendid drawing rooms
352 furnished with Morris chairs and folding chairs. These seats are
177 offered [112] to visitors of any standing, while benches two or three meters long are reserved for persons of less consequence (house boys, cooks, circle guards, notables, etc.).

631 3) By the kombemba. Benches are always reserved for visitors of
576 note or, if there are none, mats are provided. Some of these chiefs
352 even own a few commonplace chairs and perhaps one or two folding chairs.

Hierarchies among the Ministers and Officials
at the Court of the King of the Mossi

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631 There exists a kind of hierarchy among the naba. One chief may have to uncover his head before greeting another because he is his "little brother" (yaoua) or because he is in the presence of a chief of higher rank (for instance, the "petty kings," dima).

It is extremely difficult to determine the hierarchy which exists among the kombemba because there are so many of them, but they respect it even today. It would be difficult to undertake research on the subject which has only local interest and would not benefit our work.

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576 The following paragraphs, therefore, will deal only with the ministers and other officials at the emperor's court.

Mutual relations among the ministers before the French occupation. (a) The Ouidi-Naba, prime minister and chief of the cavalry. [113] After his appointment the Ouidi Naba is required only to call on the Mogho Naba. The other ministers and the notables at Ouagadougou must call on him. Naturally, by virtue of his rank, the Ouidi Naba is expected to offer them large quantities of beer and to have sheep and even cows slaughtered in their honor.

(b) The Larrhallé Naba, a minister also and guardian of the tombs. Despite what happened quite recently (March-April, 1929), the Larrhallé Naba is only required to call on the Ouidi Naba and, if he wishes to do so, on the Gounga Naba. He does not call upon the other ministers and officials.

(c) The Gounga Naba is required to call upon the two higher ministers, the Ouidi Naba and Larrhallé Naba. The other officials at court must call on him, and, like the Ouidi Naba, he offers them beer and meat.

(d) The Baloum Naba, the steward of the Mogho Naba and chief of the pages. Early in his term of office he must call upon the three principal ministers and upon the imam. No other visits are required of him, he does not call upon other court personages.

This stated, let us go on to the most important matter.

644 Ministers and other officials at the court of the Mogho Naba.
In the courtyard where the emperor's audiences are held, [114] there are heaps of stones to mark the places of the ministers and their followers.

The Ouidi Naba, Larrhallé Naba, Gounga Naba, and Kamsaongho Naba assemble with their followers. The Baloum Naba, Zusobinkassanga, and the rest also have their fixed places. They are not permitted to leave their places to greet one another until they have saluted the Mogho Naba.

In the old days only the Baloum Naba, the Zusoaba, and the Kamsaongho, together with the servitors and grooms, were allowed to call upon the emperor in his palace courtyard. The other ministers and court officials (Ouidi Naba, Larrhallé Naba, Gounga Naba, etc.) were not, under any pretext or circumstance, permitted to penetrate the interior courtyard of the home of the Mogho Naba. They had their presence announced by soroné and waited under a shelter (benda zandé) in the audience courtyard. Only a few years ago, when the present Gounga Naba succeeded his father, he asked the reason for this prohibition. Since no good reason was given, he asked the emperor for permission to break the rule, and since that time all his colleagues have followed suit.

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292
554 The cap. We have seen that at the time of his appointment [115] each minister, court official, and canton chief is presented with a cap by the Mogho Naba. Obviously he cannot wear the same cap for the rest of his life, so later replacements bought by him are regarded as just as sacred as the original. All his subjects, even the son of a naba, are strictly forbidden to wear this cap. We have also seen that in the old days an ordinary Moaga was expressly forbidden to wear the red fez (1) since this was the type of headgear

[714] 1. Among the Habé [Habe] the hoxon is the only one who may wear the red fez. When young Habé men are taken into the [French] army as riflemen, they never again wear the red fez [part of the army uniform] after they are discharged and return to their homes.

644 conferred by the Mogho Naba on the canton chiefs.

292 With the exception of the Tenkodogo Naba and, more re-
554 cently, the Boussouma Naba, neither of whom renders honors to
the Mogho Naba, all ministers, other petty dima, and chiefs of
Mossi cantons must take off his cap to greet the emperor.

576 (a) Between ministers. The Ouidi Naba does not remove his
554 cap for any of his colleagues.

645 The Larrhallé Naba, Gounga Naba, and Kamsaongo Naba are
equals and greet each other with their caps on.

The Baloum Naba and Samandé Naba are also equals, and they
do not take off their caps when greeting each other. However,
they were required to remove their caps (pougla) and even to per-
form the kantissé in the presence of the three principal ministers.

[116] Next in importance are the Nemdo Naba or "chief of
the meat" [in charge of slaughtering], the Poé Naba who is con-
fessor to the emperor's wives, the Bend Naba, chief of the drum-
mers, and, finally, a whole string of petty chiefs of no importance
who can hardly be distinguished from the general populace and
whom it would be fruitless to enumerate here.

The Poé Naba may keep his cap on when he is in the presence
of the Baloum Naba or the Samandé Naba, but he must remove it for the
other ministers and must even prostrate himself to perform the
kantissé.

645 Not very long ago, when the province chiefs of Ouagadougou
574 possessed neither comfortable houses nor furniture, the ministers
rarely visited each other. I have even once seen a minister sit
on the ground in order to give his seat to one of his colleagues.

645 Whenever matters came up which required a meeting, the
ministers met at night in one or another of their homes without the
knowledge of the public.

645 Today, the principal ministers have proper reception rooms.
576 They can, therefore, remain seated when a more important colleague
calls upon them and limit their special consideration of the visitor
to offering him a Morris armchair or a folding chair.

701 The Tensoba, the minister of war, never takes off his cap for a
554 minister or a canton chief. He does so only before the emperor.
645

701 Formerly, when war broke out and he was summoned to [117]
 554 Ouagadougou, the Tansoba [sic] assembled the principal ministers
 645 of the Mogho Naba at the home of his host, and his word was final.

Aside from this special case, he might call upon a minister, but then a servitor always brought along the cushion on which he would sit until the minister receives him in his private quarters. He was never received in public.

Once inside, the Tansoba occupied the best seat, and the minister got down on the floor and performed the Mossi salute.

In sum, the Tansoba was held in higher esteem than any other personage at the king's court.

(b) At the present time. Today ministers often visit each other.
 645 Since they have rapid means of transportation at their disposal, they
 574 regularly go about without escorts. Most often their visits are made in order to deal with matters of general interest.

When a minister calls upon another minister, he keeps his cap
 645 on and neither removes his shoes nor performs the kantissé. They
 576 are equals. This equality has been established by the local admin-
 574 istration which has granted the same rights and salary to all. The minister shakes hands with his colleague and takes a seat. He is served copious quantities of beer, and then he takes his leave.

642 In spite of assertions to the contrary, the Mossi empire is politically disorganized. This accounts for the errors committed by the local administration and the [118] mistakes held against the ministers of the Mogho Naba who for a long time were granted too much power.

The Origin of Mossi Chieftdom (Legend), or the Way the Peulh, the Yarcé, and the Blacksmiths Salute Mossi Chiefs

713 The Peulh, the Yarcé, and, to a certain extent, the black-
 184 smiths do not perform the kantissé (Mossi salute). They have a dif-
 576 ferent way of saluting naba. A curious legend explains this phe-
 nomenon. However bizarre it may seem, it is not lacking in interest, and we shall tell it just as it was handed down to us.

773

Origins of chieftdom. God first created four brothers. Like Adam and Eve in Paradise, they lived a life of ease without thought for tomorrow. When God saw this, he made four hâpidgou baskets and in them placed four miracles. The baskets were of different weights and shapes. Then he called the four brothers and said to them: "The future of each of you will depend on your choice." The eldest chose the heaviest basket, the second brother imitated his elder brother, the third took the largest basket, and the youngest took the last and smallest basket.

God then said to them: "Go forth into the world (that is, [119] Mossi country), and each of you build your house on a plain."

The next morning the four brothers started out. They came to a broad plain, and there the eldest brother remained. The three other brothers were grieved to leave him, but they continued on their way until each had found a place to settle.

It was then that the following miracles occurred.

1. The blacksmith (sayan in Mossi). Upon awakening the morning after he was established, the eldest brother found himself surrounded by a small family, large quantities of iron, and an anvil. These were the contents of his chosen kapidgou. The man at once realized that he was supposed to use the iron for something useful, so he set to work and, with God's help, discovered the hoe (wanka) and the axe (laré) which are essential for farming. Thus, he became a blacksmith (sayan).

2. The Peulh ("silmiga" in Mossi). The second brother, upon awakening, found himself surrounded by great numbers of oxen and cows, herded by some young men of his tribe. There was nothing in the way of shelter except a kind of crude hut (songdo), but he himself was very trim. His clothing was all white, and he had a white cap wound with a turban. He realized that he was the master of all of the beings around him, because he had only to give an order and large gourds filled with milk were at once brought to him. Thus, he became a Peulh.

3. The Yarga. The third brother, on waking, found [120] himself surrounded by donkeys laden with salt, kola nuts, and other articles of trade. Like his elder brother, the Peulh, he wore an ample white robe, but his cap was of a darker color. Thus, he

773 became the Yarga or tradesman.

4. The naba. As for the youngest brother, imagine his astonishment upon awakening to find himself in a splendid dwelling made up of many tata [houses] and surrounded by a real court with hundreds of courtiers, horses, and grooms. He saw a crowd approach and prostrate themselves in the Mossi salute as it is performed today. Furthermore, he had a harem. He realized that he was the uncontested master of all these people. Thus was created the naba.

These four brothers, however, could not endure having no news of each other. One day the eldest brother, the blacksmith, said to himself: "I am going to undertake a journey to find my brothers and learn what has happened to them." He started out, first taking care to provide himself with some of the tools he had made. When he reached the village, he had great difficulty in making his way through the herds of cattle and their herders. Finally he managed to present himself to the master of the place, the owner of so much wealth, and recognized his brother, the Peulh. The latter received him cordially and saw to it that abundant food, prepared in large part from milk, was served to him.

[121] After he had rested, the blacksmith told the Peulh the object of his journey, and the latter decided to accompany him. They left at dawn, the blacksmith with his load of daba (wanké) and the Peulh followed by some of his cattle and by many bearers carrying gourds filled with milk for the journey. At nightfall they reached the village of their brother, the Yarga, whom they hardly recognized. For the first time they tasted kola nuts (gouré) which, they were told, came from kornoré (shores of great rivers). In short, the Yarga gave his brothers a worthy reception.

When the blacksmith and the Peulh told their brother that they were merely passing through to inquire about his health and that they were going on the next morning to seek their youngest brother, the Yarga, in turn decided to accompany them. All three set out with many followers. The tradesman loaded a donkey with salt, intending to sell some of it to people encountered along the way and to give the rest to his young brother.

They were overcome with both admiration and fear when they reached the youngest brother's house. They had heard along the

113 road -- but did not take the news seriously -- that their brother had become a "great naba," that he ruled over numerous subjects and that it would be difficult to approach the throne on which he sat. To their great surprise, all came about exactly as had been foretold. They encountered great difficulties in breaking through the rigid court protocol. They were repulsed by sogoné, jostled by grooms, and had to wait for hours [122] before His Majesty the Naba deigned to receive them as though they were the humblest of his subjects. In spite of their protestations, the courtiers of the naba had not for a moment believed that there might really be a family tie between these strangers and the one whom they regarded as a "god."

Flourishes on drums finally announced the appearance of the potentate. When he took his place on the throne (guéré), even though his three brothers were filled with wonder, jealousy nevertheless arose in their hearts. They looked at each other questioningly. Should they abase themselves as did his subjects? Here is what happened. The blacksmith sat down on the ground but did not imitate the Mossi salute. He merely struck the ground with his zanré. The Peulh, who was more arrogant, squatted, held his arms out in front, closed his fists, and then casually uttered these words: "Lafibé raoua, gang'bélafi" (literally, "Good day, man, how are you?"). He had kept his cap on but had left his néoda (shoes) at the door out of respect and fear. As for the Yarga, who was nearest to the naba, he sat down on the ground, slightly bent his legs, bowed a little, and finally rubbed his hands together slightly by way of salutation. He had also left his néoda at the door but had kept his cap on, like his brother, the Peulh.

The naba had them led to the home of one of his ministers and for several days saw to it that they were given copious meals and presented them with many gifts.

In return, the blacksmith presented the naba with a load of wanké [123] (hoes) to cultivate his fields, the Peulh gave him some cattle, and the Yarga gave a bar of salt.

Finally they decided to leave their young brother and return to their respective villages. They took counsel along the way and decided to settle in the territory of the naba, thus making sure of his

173 protection. The Peulh would acquire more cattle by taking charge of the animals belonging to the Mossi, and the Yarga would find better markets for his salt and kola nuts. As for the blacksmith, he would make the many farm implements needed for the cultivation of the vast domains which were either not worked at all or insufficiently exploited because of the lack of tools.

They set the date for their return. Once more the naba received them very cordially, but they showed no greater deference to him than they had shown on their first visit.

And so the legend comes to an end by concluding that this is why the Peulh and the Yarga have retained their spirit of independence. As for the blacksmith, who remained poorer, he came [526] to submit to certain regulations which are common to all the Mossi although he never leaves his forge to salute the naba when he passes. As has already been noted, he merely strikes his zanré against his anvil, just as formerly he struck it on the ground by way of salutation.

[124] Chapter 8

Customs. Enthronement of the Naba. Names.

Death of a Mogho Naba

443
766 The death of a Mogho Naba is kept secret until the arrival at Ouagadougou of the Tansoba, who was forewarned when the illness became grave. On his arrival, the public is told that "the fire has gone out" (bougsaré kimé).

The personages in charge of the burial are Pazany'ting'soba (the undertaker), Tampouy Naba, Kassiri Naba, Benghin Naba, Toghin Naba, Ganin Naba, and Tanghin Naba.

The arrangement of the tomb. The grave in which the mortal remains of the king are buried is really a subterranean hut. Before the king is placed in his final dwelling (1), the following things

1. The body is wrapped in one or several cow hides.

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766 are placed in the tomb: two sheep skins (gando); some cushions (nagpouya); several bolsters (fourkamsé); and a zoukougré -- all made of leather. All of these are arranged as though the chief were to lie down to rest.

531
761 After the corpse has been washed (Naba Siguire, father of the present Mogho Naba, was washed by marabouts [125] since he was the son of a naba who was a Moslem believer), it is clothed all in white. In the house of every Mogho Naba a corner of the wall is decorated with rather attractive designs, and the dead Mogho Naba is carried through it on his way to the tomb. The sight of this corner, which is seldom visited, reminds the chief still living of the mortality of all beings and makes him realize that in the same way as he succeeded someone, so will he, in turn, be replaced by another; the corner will one day become an opening through which his own body will pass at the end of his lifetime.

In addition to the garments in which he is clothed, the following items are placed in the grave beside him: a folded white robe (fou yorgo); a pair of trousers (kourga); a blanket (fou gobga); a pair of slippers (néoda); a small knife (souga); a sword (zangoégo); a gourd of beer (dam) with a calabash over the neck and a small cloth (leppré) over it; a loaf of salt (yamsem); a gourd filled with a hundred kola nuts (gouré wamdé); a sewn sack filled with cowries (liguide ne yolmoumndi); napaga ornaments (douamba and zuyan); and tobacco if the chief smoked or chewed it.

767 The undertaker is entitled to take the salt, some kola nuts, and some meat when he departs.

[126] When the burial is over, one walks around the house of the deceased.

643 It should be noted that before the burial or sometimes when the death of the king is first known, all of his wives who have children take flight for fear that their son will be made kourita.

The kourita is a child of the deceased and must bear the latter's name. He is exiled and must never, so long as he lives, look upon the new Mogho Naba. Until the emperor is represented on earth by his kourita, his successor cannot be named. This explains the general flight of all of the wives who have children.

The Kourita

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As we have just seen, the child who is made kourita is exiled and is no longer regarded as a member of the family. He is himself the Naba, and he must never see the new emperor. His brothers may visit him, and he may visit them.

1. The kourita is washed with the remainder of the water that was used to wash the body of the deceased king.

2. He is carried through the same opening (vonré) as was used to carry out the body of the dead naba.

3. He is given the woman with whom the chief last had sexual relations before he was stricken by illness.

4. He is also given the horse which the deceased king rode every Friday.

[127] He is dressed in the last garments worn by the deceased.

He is given one or two servitors and as many grooms and is then sent to the Kilwin Naba (chief of a hamlet near Bissiga, three kilometers from Ouagadougou), who is required to give him hospitality for about a month.

In the old days, the power of a kourita was almost unlimited. Indeed, during his stay at Kilwin, he had the right to pillage, to ruin everything, and to live like a true potentate. Naturally he always had plenty of willing helpers to aid him in plundering the property of the unfortunate Mossi. The kourita traveled about through many cantons where the kombemba (plural of kombéré) paid him all the honors due the Mogho Naba. It was during these wanderings that he finally chose a permanent residence.

[127]

The new Mogho Naba is obliged to satisfy all the desires of the kourita to avoid being visited by him, an omen of disaster. Indeed, the Mossi believe that if the kourita should visit the new Mogho Naba, the latter would die.

The Enthronement -- Before and After

As we have already seen, once the burial is completed, one walks around the house of the deceased king. Then, the following persons are summoned to Ouagadougou:

1. Loumbila Naba.

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2. Saponé Naba.
3. Ouagadougou Naba (who lives in Ouagadougou). [128]
4. Zagtouli Naba.
5. Bingo Naba.
6. Gnimdi Naba.
7. Sabtenga Naba.

All of these personages are accompanied by many men, armed with arrows and rifles. They halt before the women's gate (paghnoré) and lie down. They have become guards of the royal household.

At this time the candidates for the position of Mogho Naba are all in Ouagadougou, and each of them is calling on the ministers and presenting many gifts to them. There is often competition for the post, but as a rule the eldest son of the king is named to succeed his father.

On the day of the nomination, the nabiga (from naba, "chief," and biga "son") is taken to the home of the Samandé Naba where the ministers hold council. If they agree unanimously to name the nabiga, they bring him out of the hut in which he has been anxiously awaiting their decision and tell him that Oubritenga, Zound'wéogo, Koudtenga, and so on are his property (that is, that he is recognized as the sole holder of power and that he alone rules all the lands enumerated). This is ordinarily done in the evening. The next morning the new Mogho Naba dresses and mounts his horse in front of the paghnoré (women's gate). The Kalzi Naba takes the bridle, leads the new appointee to the Loumbila Naba, and says to the latter and his followers: "Oubritenga Ramba, adi Naba, adi Kouda (People of Oubritenga, here is your master)."

[129] He is then taken before the Saponé Naba, and the latter and his followers are told: "Koud'tinga Ramba, adi Naba, adi Kouda (People of Koud'tinga, here is your master)."

The new chief is then presented to the Zagtouli Naba and to the Ouagadougou Naba with the words: "Naba Rimba Tenga Ramba, adi Naba, adi Kouda (People of Rimbatenga, here is your master)."

Finally, he is presented to the remaining chiefs with the words: "Zound'wéogo Ramba, adi Naba, adi Kouda (Here is your master)."

The Mogho Naba then returns to his house. He is king.

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Soon afterward he comes out and seats himself in the shade of a tree at the home of the Samandé Nabila [assistant to the Samandé Naba]. The doudissi are played ensemble, and the whole populace shouts joyfully.

The Ouidi Naba, the Tansoba, and all the other ministers and important personages come to present homage and to swear their fealty and submission. Each one makes a profession of loyalty.

In the evening, the new naba leaves the home of the Samandé Nabila and goes to spend the night at the home of the Ouagadougou Naba.

The next day he goes to Passepanga (from passé, "to increase, to add," and panga, "power, strength") where all other chiefs and descendants of Mogho Naba come to salute him.

At Passepanga the Mogho Naba sits under a tree with thousands of men right and left, all armed with rifles and aligned as for a session of rifle practice. They leave a kind of avenue in front of the new naba so that he is easily seen. Each [130] naba, with his retinue, comes to swear fealty and to make a profession of loyalty. The brothers of the new appointee, even those who were his rivals, come to make obeisance. The Mogho Naba then retires to the home of his gansoba (host) and sees to it that everyone has ample quantities of dam and that nissi (cows) are slaughtered for them.

The Mogho Naba remains at Passepanga for a week, and then he goes to Dimvoussé ("king's rest").

Finally, two or three years later, he chooses the place where he wishes to build his permanent residence.

Certain Names and Their Meaning

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When appointed, every chief loses his given name, and he is even forbidden to say it. He chooses a name for himself when he is appointed.

We shall now study some of these names and try to establish the moral precepts that go with them.

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1. Mogho Naba Wobgo (Boukary was his real name). When Mogho Naba Sanum (literally, "gold") drove his brother Boukary from his territory, the latter took refuge at Bassawarga where he conquered the Gourounsi whom he enslaved, although later they became his sofa [guards or military retinue].

551
43 When Naba Sanum died, several candidates presented themselves to be named Mogho Naba.

Boukary also returned, accompanied by an impressive escort of Gourounsi armed with arrows, rifles, and clubs. He made gifts to the ministers, as all his [131] rivals were doing. However, seeing that the nomination of a successor to his late brother was being delayed, he one day remarked to the Ouidi Naba: "Designate anyone you wish for the throne, but I shall wrest it from him."

The evening of the day set for the nomination arrived (we have already noted that each candidate was put in a hut at the home of the Samandé Nabila), and the future Naba Wobgo assembled all his Gourounsi followers and addressed them more or less in these terms: "The new Mogho Naba is to be appointed tonight; when I go to the home of the Samandé Nabila you follow me, be armed, and surround the place. If by any chance I am not named, I shall say to you when I come out, 'Forward! Spare no one, not even the ministers; the other nabissi, or the new appointee.' "

That night, the Gourounsi, faithful to the commands of their chief, did as he had ordered.

While the ministers were discussing which of the nabissi should be named (of course, the future Naba Wobgo was automatically eliminated), the Larhallé Naba came out to relieve himself. In the half-darkness he was astonished to see the men armed with arrows, rifles, and clubs. He reported these disquieting developments to the Ouidi Naba, who at once came out to see for himself. Everyone knew that only Boukary could organize such a plot. Fearing that they would otherwise all be murdered, they unanimously appointed him Mogho Naba.

When the time came for him to select the name that would be his until death, he said this: [132] "Kim missi laguem koabga kon bougouss Wobgo (a hundred ghosts cannot frighten an elephant)."
I am sure that here he was addressing his competitors. Then he added: "Ni Tiem Koudré Banghe pouré taloug'pa salga (an old man who bequeaths his property wisely avoids strife)." Here he was addressing the ministers. He was aware that he was not liked, so he had prepared for war. The ministers had not wanted to name him and had done so only out of fear of being murdered.

55/ 2. Mogho Naba Kom (kom, "water"). When he was still quite
 643 young, Mogho Naba Kom, who is on the throne today, succeeded
 his father, Naba Siguiri, to the great surprise of his enemies. He
 took the name of Naba Kom.

(a) Kom sound Tambdo ti koulg'king lad moaghana. (During
 the rainy season when much water falls, the rivers and seas rejoice
 to see their water swell.)

(b) Neb san toul béogo bi a balem Wendé. (He who dreams of
 tomorrow must place his faith in God.)

(c) Sandib, laguem koabga ti pigh'pam nionré. Since he was
 very young at the time of his nomination, many begrudged him the
 appointment, and sorcery was used to cause his death. This third
 name means "A hundred charlatans, makers of charms, cannot
 prevail against the pigha (rock, i.e., the chief)."

(d) Gonpaniendégha kon nies niédga. (One does not [133]
 wipe one's bottom with thorns and brambles.) This alludes to his
 enemies and means that in spite of them he rules all the same.

(e) Tang'niebga belem mogré pamé wek'balbo. (Since the
 crocodile can only really live and procreate along the banks of
 watercourses, what is a mountain crocodile to do if he desires many
 offspring? He must move his dwelling and go to the water.)

55/ 3. The Ouidi Naba (actually named Rabi), Naba Boulga (lit-
 645 erally, "well [pit]").

(a) Baning sorr'yoagba n'tilig kinsé la wamsé. (The large
 white or sorghum grown under the Strophanthus has no fear of being
 eaten by birds or monkeys.)

(b) Yel somd'boulgh tont niédbo. (The well of righteousness
 cannot be filled.)

4. The Gounga Naba (actually named Namébrogo Ilboudo),
 Naba Yemdé (literally, "hippopotamus"). Yem deng kouilga ti
zimbi datin dem yaré. ("When the hippopotamus is first to arrive
 at the waterhold, the fish can play about at will," or "when fish
 play around a hippopotamus, they will not be troubled by either big
 fish or fishermen.")

5. The Baloum Naba (Tenga Ouédraogo), Naba Tanga (literally,
 "mountain").

(a) "A mountain crowned with trees is soon noticed," or "in
 order to be respected, one must have good support, good backing."

551 [134] (b) Kata laghem koagb'kon sirigh tanga. (A hundred
645 barking hyenas cannot shake a mountain.)

6. Kamsoro Naba (Ouene Nongué), Naba Niouga ("cat"). He is chief eunuch. Nioung'nok wendé na pa ne Sabelem. (A cat who trusts in God is sure to preserve his blackness.) In other words, one who is protected by the Mogho Naba, his "God," will never lack for anything; everything will come to him as if by magic.

551 7. Naba Gnighnemdo (Mogho Naba). Naba Oubri, the founder
643 of the Ouagadougou dynasty, fell in love with one of his own daugh-
835 ters and had intercourse with her. The girl became pregnant and gave birth to a son. The wives of Naba Oubri wanted to put both the child and the mother to death. They asked the girl the name of the child's father, and she replied, "Ask my father, he ought to know." When Oubri was questioned, he answered: "Bassi yan ya mam lam gnighnemdo (Do nothing, this is my own flesh)."

The child of this incestuous union was thus named Gnighnemdo and later succeeded his relative, Naba Nasbiré.

The Placing of Statues at Loumbi-Raogo

211 Ganlougou. In the old days, upon the death of a Mogho
306 Naba or soon after, a jeweler was called in [135] to make a wax
532 statuette, later to be cast in bronze, in the likeness of the late chief. The jeweler also made statuettes of one soroné, one napagha, one bendré, and one lounga, and all were deposited at the home of the Loumbila Naba. This practice was suppressed upon the ar-
[177] rival of the French, and it appears that there is no statue of Naba Siguiri, father of Naba Korn, the present naba, at Loumbila.

The acting Mogho Naba is never supposed to see these statues, and the jeweler who made the likeness of his father must not see them either. The jeweler was paid 100,000 cowries, a horse, a donkey,
[135] a cow, a wife, a large robe, and 1,000 kola nuts, and he was then sent away from Ouagadougou. He must never return and must never see the new Mogho Naba.

These gifts represented a considerable sum in the old days, even today for that matter. They were given to aid the jeweler in consulting seers and charlatans for the purpose of prolonging his life. Tradition has it that unless he followed faithfully the prescriptions given by the seers, he would die within a year after completing the statues.

The Kombéré: Death, Enthronement

631 Death. Upon the death of a kombéré two representatives in
 763 mourning are sent from the canton to Ouagadougou to deliver the
 202 sad news to the Mogho Naba. The envoys are entrusted with a
 horse or a sheep, depending on the importance of the naba. Tanga
 branches are tied to the animal's tail (see Ouidi Naba, Chapter 4).

[136] When the first emissary reaches the courtyard of the
 Mogho Naba, he sits down, taking care to place one hand on the
 ground and stretching out his arm. Since the very sight of the horse
 is significant, even before any explanation is offered, the Zusoaba
 enters the house of the Mogho Naba and comes out again bearing a
 gourd of water with flour in it (zom kom) which he pours on the
 envoy's arm.

The horse is then handed over to a representative of the Ouidi
 Naba who removes the branches and leads the animal to Within
 [Ouidin].

The Zusoaba takes back the gourd, and it is only then that the
 Ouidi Naba says to the Mogho Naba: "Naba zagl yka sambga le
tongalamé (Chief So-and-So has been stricken with such-and-such
 an illness and has succumbed)." It should be added that before going
 to see the Mogho Naba, the envoys first inform the ministers of the
 death of the kombéré.

631 The Mogho Naba asks a few appropriate questions and sends
 766 the representatives to prepare the kouré. On the day of the cere-
 mony, the Nabitienga (eldest son of the deceased chief) has large
 quantities of beer and saghbo prepared and sheep and cattle killed to
 feed the people gathered in great numbers for the occasion.

The house is circled, as was described for the Mogho Naba.

[145] (a) Koupeogo (kouré basket). The koupeogo is a basket, artisti-
 cally made, into which is put the foutou (clothing of the deceased),
 [137] koursi (trousers), his pougla (red fez), his seoda (slippers),
 the zandé (club), and the wed'zouré (horse's tail). This basket is
 laid upon a pé'gaongo (skin of a sheep) in the zaongo (antechamber).

One of the sisters of the Nabitienga, usually the eldest daugh-
 ter of the deceased, carries the péogo outside and seats herself at the
 place where the dead chief held his daily audiences (guéré). The
benda, liunsé, and gangando drums are played together, and then

63] everyone gives what he can. Everyone from the Nabitienga down
 766 through his brothers and sisters, close relatives, and their brothers
 and sisters, in short, anyone even remotely related to the de-
 ceased, comes up and offers something. Most often the gift is made
 up of cowries.

The koupeogo is then returned to the zaongo. Some zom kom
 (water with flour in it) and some dam (dolo or fermented millet
 beer) are poured at the door of the antechamber.

The benda and other drummers gather up all the cowries they
 have received and go a short distance from the house to divide them
 up.

The benda are expected to give a few cowries to any Yarga,
 Silmimoaga, or sayan (1) who happens to pass by during the dis-

1. Yarga: a Dioula [Diula] of the
 Mandé [Mande] group. Silmimoaga:
 one who has adopted the customs of
 the Peulh.

tribution.

Sayan: blacksmith.

(b) Fado. This is the share that goes by right to the Mogho
 Naba from the estate of every kombéré.

[138] The Mogho Naba sends representatives to whom are en-
 trusted a rooster, a sheep, and, depending on the importance of the
 chief, a cow and 5,000 to 10,000 cowries.

As soon as he has been presented to the Nabitienga, the first
 envoy of the Mogho Naba says to him: "Nab'kayé ti mog'naba yel
tid wa pous' nabitiengh'togo lad reguib' lokon'wa tib laguemb taba
ti ya yel koudgo (Such-and-such a chief having died, the Mogho
 Naba sends us to deliver his condolences to the Nabitienga and to
 request of him that the quiver of the naba be turned over to us so
 that it may be placed beside those of his ancestors, as is the cus-
 tom)."

The Nabitienga thanks them and orders the loko [quiver] to be
 brought out at once. It is placed on the ground, and sacrifice is
 made, in turn, of the chicken, the sheep, and even the cow sent
 by the Mogho Naba.

631 All of these preliminaries are only the beginning, and when
 643 they are completed, the emperor's first envoy orders the Nabitienga
 428 to go out into the sunshine so that the fado [share for the Mogho
 766 Naba] may be claimed. The Nabitienga complies with the request. Thereupon the first envoy says to him through a messenger: "Mogh' Naba yé tid wa reg fado, ya nig'tousri (1,000 head of cattle), pissi tousri (1,000 sheep), bouss'tousri (1,000 goats), foutou tousri (1,000 garments)," etc. To which the Nabitienga replies: "Tond ba sin ki a ka baş roumsi ne arzek'yé (our late father left neither animals nor other wealth sufficient to satisfy the demands of the Mogho Naba)."

The messenger reports the reply to the emperor's representatives. The relatives of the Nabitienga go [139] to gather together a wanka (hoe), a laré (ax), and a goégo (sickle), and then they tell the nayiridamba (representatives) to go into the antechamber where all of the wealth is piled up. The nayirdamba [sic] send in some soroné who come back and report on what is there. Then they ask the Nabitienga for the fado a second time, and this time it is given to them in the form of the following articles: a robe, a pair of trousers, bracelets, fodo, rouamba (ornaments of the napagha), an ample robe, a pair of slippers, a knife (zangoégo), some salt, some cowries, kalgo (soubala) balls, nemdo (dried meat), moui (rice), etc.

The envoys are housed for a whole week by the Nabitienga, aided by the inhabitants and his relatives.

On the eighth day, before taking leave of his guests, the Nabitienga slaughters a cow, has large quantities of saghbo and beer prepared and sheep killed, gives clothing to all the envoys of the Mogho Naba, offers them up to 50,000 cowries, depending on their importance, etc.

He has a horse saddled with his father's saddle, and the animal is tethered in front of the antechamber.

One of the nayirdamba unties the horse and walks three times around the house of the deceased naba. The person who mounts the horse is given liguidi (cowries) and clothing and the fez of the naba. He is entitled to keep all this after his return to Ouagadougou, after he has reported to the authorities. The horse becomes the property of the Mogho Naba and is turned over to the Wedranga Naba (personal equerry of the king).

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431 The Nabitienga notifies the populace of the [140] canton that in view of his father's death he wishes to go to Ouagadougou to lay claim to the succession. He then asks the aid of every man present: 100 cowries from each ykanda (head of compound) and 50 cowries from each dakonré (bachelor). This aid is at once forthcoming unless there is rivalry for the post. In that case the villages give their help to the candidate they wish to have appointed.

When he reaches Ouagadougou, the Nabitienga makes a series of calls and presents numerous gifts.

He gives: 1) 10,000 cowries and a sheep to the minister of the Mogho Naba who has jurisdiction over him; 2) 50,000 to 100,000 cowries, depending on his importance, a horse, and sometimes a cow to the Mogho Naba himself; 3) varying quantities of cowries, depending on the importance of the person visited, to the other ministers and important personages; 4) 1,000 to 2,000 cowries and a rooster to the Zusoaba (chief eunuch) whom he visits the following morning; and finally 5) generous gifts during the rest of his stay to the bonsramba (griot), benda, luinsé, doudissi, and gangando, as well as other courtiers.

631 Nomination. A kombéré candidate may stay at Ouagadougou from twenty to thirty days or even longer. On the eve of the nomination, the Mogho Naba summons the Baloum Naba and orders him to have the Baloum Naba and orders him to have the Nabitienga provide a chicken and a sheep for his sacrifice. This is certain proof that he is going to be appointed the next day, so he very generously rewards the oroné who brings him the message.

[141] The sheep (pesgo) and the rooster (noraogo) are sent to the Mogho Naba, who has them killed in his courtyard.

The next day the Mogho Naba, as soon as he appears, summons the Ouidi Naba, the Larhallé Naba, the Kamsoro Naba, the Gounga Naba, and the Baloum Naba, and says to them: "Today I wish to make an end of the koubissi ("children of the kouré" or funeral observances); which among the candidates here is really capable of succeeding the late chief?" The Ouidi Naba replies: "Do whatever pleases you, Sire." After this, the Mogho Naba says: "In that case, I designate the Nabitienga, for his father did not forget me an instant during his life and it would not make sense to pass over his son." Then the Mogho Naba returns to his palace.

The Ouidi Naba returns to his place, calls the Baloum Naba, the Benid Naba, and the Poé Naba, and tells them the sovereign's

[63] decision. These three personages thank the Ouidi Naba, and the Baloum Naba in turn goes back to his place, summons the Sogoné-kassanga (chief of the sogoné), and orders him to send for a reliable sogoné. The latter, accompanied by a Bilbalga (inhabitant of Bilbalogo, the section of the Baloum Naba), is sent to answer the call of the Ouidi Naba.

The Ouidi Naba says to them: "Yelé Nakomsé, Nabaoudba tib leb saonrin (tell the naba candidates to come out into the sun), La f soki Nabitienga diessé à ba sin nan ki a yela mé ti niondi kon and nam (and ask the Nabitienga which son or relative his father, before he died, designated to succeed him)." The Nabitienga replies: "Yamb yam m'ba ka niak ned [142] yé (act as you see fit; my father designated no one)."

Once more the Ouidi Naba sends a question: "La ting ramb yé la me tib kon anda (which candidate was chosen by the inhabitants of the canton)?" The Nabitienga replies again: "Ting ramb ka niak ned tib kon yé (the inhabitants have no choice but yours)." When this reply is brought to the Ouidi Naba, he finally says: "Go now and invest the Nabitienga with full powers; he is the choice of the Mogho Naba (Toughini kon nabitieng'nam, ti Mog'Naba yella me tib kon nien)." Then the envoys snatch the sheepskin which the Nabitienga was wearing over his shoulder and turn in one corner of it. They bear him in triumph to the tom-boko (literally, "hole in the dust"), and the appointed naba is now acclaimed by the crowd. He is then taken successively before the Ouidi Naba, the Zusoaba, and the Baloum Naba. Finally he is led to the shelter in which stands the Bend' Naba (chief of all the drummers of the Mogho Naba), who salutes him to the sound of his drum.

[551] The Zabyouré (literally, "pseudonym"). This is the name adopted by each new chief. It replaces his real name which must not be uttered during the lifetime of the naba.

As he stands before the Band'Naba, the Nabitienga says: "Everyone has honored me, respected me, and the Mogho Naba has chosen me to succeed my father. I have no zabyouré, and I cannot, after all, get along without one." He then begins to enumerate some possible ones (for a study of these names, see [143] the special section above). Once all of these formalities are completed, the

631 new naba mounts his horse and goes off with the minister who has jurisdiction over him. The minister offers him some zomi kom (water with flour in it) and then welcomes him into his courtyard where he is offered a canari of dam (beer) and gouré (kola nuts). He is then escorted back to the home of his gangsoba by a goodly throng of drummers, horsemen, etc.

631 All the defeated candidates are required to shave their heads
302 at once and to make a formal act of submission to the new naba as soon as he has returned to the home of his gangsoba (host). It should be added that the candidates allow their hair to grow from the day of the death of the naba to the day on which his successor is appointed.

631 The new appointee must offer dam, saghbo, and cowries to the
431 nayiridamba. He also offers dam, kola nuts, and cowries to the drummers.

631 On the following day he accompanies the minister to the home
644 of the Mogho Naba. During the monarch's second audience (beg sonré), the minister calls him to salute the Mogho Naba. The new naba goes forward to the tomboko, cries out three times (cries of joy), and then performs the kantissé (the Mossi salute). Thereupon, the Ouidi Naba says to the Mogho Naba: "The chief whom you deigned to honor yesterday wishes to express his gratitude." The Mogho Naba responds to the salute and then, for the first time, offers him a canari of dam.

The new naba then calls upon the ministers and other important personages (Ouidi Naba, Larrhallé Naba, Gounga Naba, [144] Poé Naba, Kamsoro Naba, Samandé Naba, the imam, Daporé Naba, and the next day the Zusoaba).

Seven days later the Mogho Naba gives him a robe, a pougla (red fez), a nagpouuré (cushion), and néoda (slippers).

The new naba removes his old ragged clothes (I use the description advisedly, since custom forbids him to change his clothes until he has received those given by the Mogho Naba). He gives the discarded garments to a relative, dresses in the robe from the Mogho Naba, puts on the pougla (fez), and becomes a true naba.

631 A few days later he asks permission to return to his own lands. Many court representatives (nayiridamba) accompany him. It is the

631 duty of these representatives to assemble the notables of the vil-
lages and to order them to submit to the new naba, the only one
recognized by the Mogho Naba.

631 In order to show their joy,³ the people have large quantities of
527 beer prepared, and games are organized which may continue for
several days. The village notables come to offer their submission
and to swear fealty, bringing gifts (cowries, sheep, etc.) in ac-
cordance with the resources of the village and the wealth of the
inhabitants.

631 When the nayirdamba leave for Ougadougou, the naba gives:
431 a wife and a robe to the Bilbalga; a wife and a robe to the soroné
of the Mogho Naba; a wife and a robe to the soroné or the
Baloum-Naba; a wife and a robe to the child of the Bend'Naba; etc.

Any children born to the women [145] so given belong, re-
spectively, to the masters of these representatives.

631 Burial. Their burial is carried out in much the same manner
766 as in the case of the Mogho Naba, except for the specific persons
involved. The arrangement of the tomb is also similar, although
there is, of course, less pomp displayed. [146]

3[i.e. At the appointment of the new naba-Analyst]

Chapter 9

The Two Major Mossi Festivals

Mossi Festivals

796 In actual fact, there is only one annual festival celebrated by
527 the Mossi. It is known as tinsé or tingana. A second festival,
which is more a family affair, is called basgha. The latter is
variously named, depending on the region: for the Mogho Naba,
it is called m'barengma; for the ordinary Moaga, basgha; in
certain regions, kinkirga; etc. Although the date for the first
festival is fixed by the Mogho Naba, the second festival is cele-
brated by each canton chief, each village chief, or each ikanda
(married man) on any day that suits him, usually after the harvest.

In addition to these principal festivals, every important vil-
lage has its annual festival, a kind of special market day. On

796 that day there is dam (beer) in every house and abundant meat,
 527 and the inhabitants of nearby villages come to the festivities.

Here we shall describe only the two major festivals, tinsé and basgha.

Tinsé (Mossi Ritual Festival), or Naba Oubri Ma Kouré
 (The Funeral of Naba Oubri's Mother)

796 Origin. Naba Oubri, son of Zoungrana and [147] founder of
 769 the Ouagadougou dynasty, gave his mother a very impressive
 kouré (funeral). The kouré took on the appearance of a great festi-
 val because of the large number of animals sacrificed, the gen-
 erous supply of food; and the great quantity of beer (dam) pre-
 pared. Since Oubri was very powerful, he ordered that the anni-
 versary of his mother's funeral should be celebrated every year,
 even after his death. His mother was Pogh'toe Hinga (literally,
 "bearded woman").

For this reason and also to obtain health for his people and
 abundant rain for their crops, the Mogho Naba still quite regularly
 celebrates this annual festival known as tinsé (from tinga "earth").
 There is no set date for it; it is celebrated whenever possible,
 usually after the harvest.

796 Preparatory sacrifices. Before setting the date for the tinsé,
 769 the Mogho Naba has livestock (cows, sheep) and roosters killed
 782 on the tombs of his predecessors.

According to precedence, the sacrifices begin with Naba
 Zoungrana, Oubri's father, whose tomb is at Komtoega in the
 circle of Tenkodogo. The Mogho Naba sends a cow to the Loubi-
 Raogo Naba to be sacrificed on the tomb of Naba Oubri.
 Oubriyago Naba (the guardian of Oubri's tomb) has the duty of
 sacrificing the animal.

The other animals are sacrificed by the Ouagadougou Naba,
 representing the family of the Ninissi (first [148] inhabitants of
 the country). He is accompanied by the eunuchs who are the
 guardians of the tombs (yad'nanamsé).

In order to honor emperors whose tombs are in various parts of
 the colony, representatives of the Mogho Naba are sent out with

796 sacrificial animals, and they are required to celebrate the festi-
769 val in these villages before returning to Ouagadougou.

782 In the old days the animals destined to be sacrificed were captured in the cantons by horsemen assigned to that duty. Today, however, the Mogho Naba requests his vassals to supply them.

It should be noted that the following Peulh chiefs provide cattle of their own volition and without any compulsion: Komtam Silmanaba, Gombogo Silminaba, Kourgou Silminaba, and Barkoundba Silminaba.

796 Setting the date for the ceremony. A week after the sacrifices
769 the emperor summons the Tansoba (war minister) or, if he cannot appear (sickness or some other chance reason), the Konkosé Naba. This personage must reply to the summons on the day he receives it.

796 The king then assembles his principal ministers and sets the
769 date for the celebration of the tinsé, twenty or twenty-one days ahead. The Mogho Naba hands the Tansoba several knotted ropes
211 (yoda) which are to be distributed by him to the following chiefs: [149] Sapone Naba, Tuili Naba, and Loumbila Naba.

The last-named chief hands his rope over to the Dapelgo Naba and to the Méguet Naba.

There are as many knots in the rope as there are days remaining until the festival.

As soon as the Tansoba has handed over the ropes, he must immediately return to his village.

The persons who have received the ropes are required to transmit them to the kombemba (plural of kombéré, canton chief) who untie a knot each day.

796 Celebration of the festival. Early on the day of the ceremony,
769 a Friday (arzouma), the ministers and other court officials present themselves before the king to wish him welcome (tabo).

796 The Mogho Naba presents a loaf of salt (yamss'néré, literally
769 "salt millstone") which is to be divided among the following digni-
263 taries: Ouidi Naba, Larrhallé Naba, Gounga Naba, Kamsaongho Naba, Bougretenga Naba, Benga Naba, Poé Naba, Tampouf Naba, Bend'Naba, and their followers.

Half of a loaf of salt is also offered to the Baloum Naba, Dapoya Naba, Samandé Naba, and Wedranga Naba.

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263 The latter reserve a small share for the Zussoba [150] (chief eunuch) and the Bilbalsé (inhabitants of Bilbalogo, the section of the Baloum Naba).

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769 The next morning, Saturday, the king has a large number of cattle slaughtered and many sagbo cakes prepared. The latter are piled one on top of another to form tahinsé (mountains) in the courtyard where the daily audiences are held.

On these mountains of sagbo are placed whole quarters of sheep. Many bowls of cooked rice are put in rows beside the millet cakes.

The Larrhallé Naba, the second minister who is in command of the Samandé (the court), stands before one of the mountains of sagbo, takes a cake which he divides into three parts, and tosses them at random in different directions in the courtyard. Thus he offers food to the invisible spirits and to the manes of previous ministers who once frequented the place. During this ceremony he utters some words which may be translated as follows: "Take this sagbo and bring peace and happiness to the emperor and to his people."

After this, the Larrhallé Naba returns to his kouga (mound of stones) to make way for the Gand'Naba. The latter, too, picks up a cake and also the foot of a cow. Then the king's bodyguard, the followers of the ministers, the Bilbalsé, and the emperor's servitors make a dash for the mountains of sagbo and the rice, and there is a general scramble to get the biggest pièce. It goes without saying that they come out of the fray covered with sauce, and half of the food is spilled on the ground. [151]

At this point, the ministers and their escorts depart.

Each ikanda (head of a family) calls the family elder (the patriarch) and gives him a rooster and a goat (lacking a sheep) to be sacrificed to the manes of his ancestors. The old man pronounces the following words: "Youmd yelle n'ta, ta zagla yel t'm konfo, tif reg kouin gnimassem, la sounogo, ta pam kodo, la rogom (accept these offerings on the part of X... and grant him health, happiness, and prosperity. Protect his family and grant him good harvests and many children.

It is interesting to note that the meat, whether boiled or roasted, is never seasoned with red pepper (tiparé), for the tinsé [spirits]

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776 would visit their anger upon those who were guilty of such an indiscretion by making them blind or at least causing them severe eye trouble in later years.

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[261] Everyone celebrates the tinsé at home by preparing all sorts of food (sagbo, rice, corn, beans, etc.). The people stuff themselves to the point of indigestion.

Thirty days after the anniversary celebration of the funeral of Oubri's mother, the Tansoba (war minister) returns to the emperor the rope used for the date of the tinsé.

Around the fortieth day, that is, a week after the departure of the Tansoba, the Loumbila Naba comes to salute the emperor. The latter gives him a cow to be slaughtered at Widin (section of the Ouidi Naba).

A week after the departure of the Loumbila Naba, [152] the Guilingou Tensoba pays a visit to the Mogho Naba. We have already seen that it was an ancestor of this Tensoba who asked Naba Zoungrana to send his son, Oubri, to administer the country and to help him drive out the Habé who today live by the cliffs of Bandiagara (Sudan). The Mogho Naba is obligated to give a cow and some salt to this Tensoba.

Then comes the turn of the Saponé Naba (nayrdin, representative of Naba Kouda) who, with his followers, receives a cow and some salt. Finally, for Bonsa Naba, Kamsaouguin Tensoba, and Pazani Tensoba, the Mogho Naba has a sheep killed which is served with many plates of sagbo.

It should be noted that when the Tangsob-ramba appear before the emperor they put down their laya (magic axes) and are at once brought white roosters which they are expected to kill in the timpelem (courtyard).

Thus, it is apparent that this festival has no particularly remarkable features. Its sole aim is to make peace between the living and the dead and to give everyone a chance to eat well.

The Basgha of the Mogho Naba, or the Nights the Emperor M'ba
(Rarengma) Sleeps Away from Home

(May my father not arrive before I do.)

769 The basgha. Before making use of his newly harvested crops,
782 the Moaga ikanda (married man, head of a family) is obligated to
796 offer this new produce to his ancestors. Therefore, he has dam
(dolo, millet beer) prepared with the large red [153] millet, al-
ready sprouted, and cakes made with the millet or the sorghum.
He kills chickens and a goat, or a ram, and invites his neighbors
and relatives to the feast. He is convinced that the manes of his
ancestors share the feast.

The emperor of the Mossi is no exception to this rule. The
basgha of the Mogho Naba is celebrated with more pomp, and we
shall describe it briefly below.

It should first be noted that there is no particular date set by
custom for the basgha, either for the Mogho Naba or for the ordi-
nary Moaga. Everyone celebrates it whenever he can after the
harvest.

491 The sotasgo (completion of the road). Before the French came
653 and the administration took over road building, each minister had
a road or, more accurately, a broad path which led straight to the
king's courtyard and which had to be maintained by the minister.
Since everyone is busy in the fields during the winter months, it
is easily understandable that the roads are somewhat neglected
during that season. When the Mogho Naba decides to put every-
thing to rights with his ancestors, he notifies the Ouidi Naba, his
first minister, who sends word to the other ministers that they must
clear their soyan (from soré, "path"). The ministers order the in-
habitants of their respective sections to do the work, but put off
completing the last stretch leading into the courtyard, samandé,
[154] until the date for sotasgo is known.

653 Sotasgo takes place on a Saturday.

The Ouidi Naba makes a large pile of several loads of millet
(kaguindi) and chooses about forty strong young men to carry it
into the court of the king. His colleagues (Larrhallé Naba, Gounga

653 Naba, and Baloum Naba) do the same thing. (We have seen in an earlier chapter, under "Payments to the Mogho Naba" that the millet brought by the ministers and vassals makes up the food supply for the emperor and his wives; the harvest from his own fields is used to feed foreigners and to make beer for the basgha.)

[653] In order to arouse the young men to greater efforts, drummers accompany them, playing "pang'rog'kamga, kamba komsomba (these young men were born of strength; they are worthy of their parents)."

Loads of millet are presented to the emperor during his first audience (wend'pous yan), after the ministers have paid their respects. The Soré Naba (literally, "chief of the path"), taking his place before the Mogho Naba, but with his back to him, orders the young men by the sound of drums to finish clearing the roads of the naba up to the king's courtyard. Since the work was virtually completed, this is a mere formality.

The ministers' followers and the bearers who brought in the millet, equipped with axes, daba, and even sticks, pretend to work energetically. They gesticulate, cry out, and [155] sing. The Soré Naba then goes under a shelter reserved for him, and the young men join him there.

796 The Ouidi Naba, the Larhallé Naba, the Gounga Naba, and the
769 Kamsaoug' Naba salute the emperor, and it is only then that the latter sets the date for the celebration of his basgha.

Once the date is set, the bodyguards of the Mogho Nabo (samand' kamba), whose chiefs are Samandé and Rakogdo, are ordered to start at once to repairing the shelters in the courtyard where the daily audiences are held.

Sleeping away from home. Three days before the Feast of the Dead and as soon as he has given his pugtiéma (first wife) the sprouted millet for making dam (beer), the Mogho Naba becomes uneasy. This is because the kimsé (manes of his ancestors) are present in the house. He must find more peaceful lodgings.

On Wednesday evening, therefore, he goes to the home of the Samand'Naba of Kamsaoghin. He spends the night there, but at cockcrow the following morning he returns to his home where he spends the day. That night he goes to Gounghin and spends the night in a house near the home of the Gounga Naba, his third minister.

796 Friday night he stays at the home of Bangr'Naba Sambo. Very early
 769 Saturday morning he returns home in time to be present when the
 Bend'Naba (chief of the drummers) comes to wish him a happy new
 year and a long life and to pray that Wenam (God) will spare him
 to [156] offer many more bascé (plural of basgha) in honor of his
 predecessors.

[431] It goes without saying that during the nights spent away from
 home the emperor receives many visitors and substantial gifts.
 The persons at whose homes he spends the night naturally give him
 the warmest possible welcome.

Preparatory sacrifices. These are performed inside the house
 of the Mogho Naba, and the details are known only to the following
 four persons: Mogho Naba, Emperor of the Mossi; Baloum Naba,
 chief steward and chief of pages; Zussoba Kassanga, chief eunuch
 and guardian of the harem; the pugtiéma, the first wife of the
 Mogho Naba.

796 It is known that animals are sacrificed, with the Mogho Naba
 769 himself holding the victim and pronouncing the sacramental words.
 782 Perhaps there is also worship of certain sacred fetishes. In any
 event, we are convinced that there is nothing involved in the
 ceremony which is contrary to the principles of French civilization
 since there is no human sacrifice. We should have liked very much
 to describe these ancient practices, but the secret has been well kept.

796 Celebration of basgha. As soon as the Mogho Naba appears in
 769 front of the zango (antechamber), the Bend' Naba beats a drum while
 533 calling the names of deceased naba, beginning with Naba Oubri, the
 founder of the Ouagadougou dynasty. [157]

As soon as the Bend'Naba stops playing, he and his followers
 are served sagbo (millet cakes), mouf (rice), dam (millet bee.),
 and nemdo (meat).

796 Likewise, the ministers and other court officials who come to
 769 greet tabo (the new year) are given dam, sagbo, rice, and meat by
 [554] the Mogho Naba. The food is distributed to the dignitaries in the
 order of precedence, and the rest is reserved for the Bilbalessé and
 other followers of the ministers.

[576] About eight-thirty, the ministers and court officials say
wennatassé, "God be with us," which means good bye, and then
 they return home.

169 they return to their homes.

796 The Bend'Naba and other drummers remain in the courtyard un-
533 til the Sogon' kassanga (chief eunuch) bring to them, on behalf of the emperor, the sum of 10,000 cowries and some beer. In the old days a young captive, seated amidst the cowries, accompanied these gifts. The messengers say to the drummers: "Nab'yet b'wa poustabo (the king sends us to give you these gifts on the occasion of his basgha)."

The chief of the drummers pours a drink for the Zussoba and orders his followers to play together "Tompaongo, Wend'kaouss'Naba nkéré, Wenna wilig'vinré" (literally, "We thank the king for his gifts. May God give the Mogho Naba long life and allow us to come back to play here next year").

Before sending them away, the Mogho Naba is obligated to give a karfo (black robe [158] imported by the Haoussa) to the Bend' Naba and a robe to the Loun Naba (chief of the luinsé). Water with flour in it is likewise brought to the Bend'Naba, and he scatters it about the courtyard. The emperor is required by custom to walk upon this water of gnimassem (of good health) as he goes back to his apartments.

When all these formalities have been completed, the Bend'Naba, accompanied by his bards, takes his leave. The festival is over. On the days following, the drummers call on the ministers and [431] the other court dignitaries and are given many gifts (cowries and livestock).

All of these gifts are retained by the Bend'Naba or by someone chosen by him, and they are distributed later, with due regard for the hierarchy existing among the griot. The share of the older men is always greater than that accorded to the younger ones. [159]

Chapter 10

The Wives of the Naba. The sogoné. The Pogsiouré

Naba Warga and the Origin of the Sogoné

173 Naba Warga was constantly at war with the Riziam Naba, who
644 was called Mamzi (which means "I myself do not know"). He had
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173 to be on the field of battle himself and for five years was unable
644 to vanquish his enemy who was entrenched on a mountain and
357 well supported by the local inhabitants.

After Warga had tried every means at his command to conquer his enemy, he hacked down the crops, which were almost ripe, and captured all the livestock that ventured down the mountain. In short, he devastated the country.

This succeeded so well that at last the local inhabitants, faced with famine, had to choose between the life of the chief they were sheltering and their own lives. Mamzi was therefore handed over and imprisoned at Saponé (1).

1. The principal canton town in the district of Ouagadougou.

During the five years of this difficult campaign, Naba Warga, aside from the warriors, had only a young boy to serve him since his wives were not present. The boy served as cook [160] and personal servant. In short, he performed the duties of a wife so well that Warga decided that he was worthy of some notice and decided to reward him.

When he had returned to his lands, he freed this faithful servitor after first giving him a wife. Then it occurred to him that several children in his court could perform the same services. He therefore ordered them to be recruited on a large scale, and these were the sogoné.

357 Every boy recruited to become a sogoné can expect to be given
644 a wife, however little she may be worth, when he is freed.

1554 The sogoné have the same standing as the napagba,² and they
304 wear the same ornaments. A group of bracelets worn on the wrists, in fact, distinguish the napagba and the sogoné from free women.

[243] It is their duty to serve the naba. They form a half circle around the naba when he appears; they accompany him on his short outings; and they carry the scepter and all of the insignia of chiefdom. They serve drinks to the naba, fan him when he takes a nap with fans called fika, make his bed, and do various errands. Likewise a naba never sends anyone but a sogoné to take a message to his wives.

‡[i.e. royal wives - Analyst]

644 The sogoné may not wear trousers. He wears a type of
 357 drawers called benda. All the nanamsé (plural of naba) have
 292 followed the example of Naba Warga, and nowadays the most
 insignificant kombéré has at least a dozen sogoné.

[161]

The Napogré. General Conditions. Number of Wives of the
 Emperor Today. Ornaments.

644 Depending on whether the napagha is destined for the chief
 595 himself or for one of his brothers or sons, the instruction of the
napogré are given either in the quarters of the pugtiéma (first wife
 of the naba) or at the home of one of the old nabissi.

644 Water is heated and in it is put a bit of karite butter and other
 595 ingredients. After the girl's head, armpits, and pubic hair have
 302 been shaved by some old women, the pugtiéma or the old man dips
 a hand into the water, utters certain cabalistic words, and gives
 the names of all the chiefs who have succeeded each other up to
 the father of the current ruler.

644 The water is then given to the old women who bathe the
 595 young napagha. It is at this time that she is instructed in the duties
 and obligations of the napogré, what she may do and what she
 should avoid.

[301] The new wife is then adorned with bracelets, kouaba (plural
 of kobré), and with rouamba [ankle rings], or with only bracelets.
 The chief may marry her at once or, depending on the circum-
 stances, send her to the man for whom she is destined.

[684] The napagha must never have relations with any man other
 than her husband as long as she lives. Formerly she was pitilessly
 killed if she broke this rule. [162]

302 As we have just seen, the napagha has no hair, and this is
 301 the primary distinctive mark. Also, she wears bracelets on her
 wrists, sometimes even on her arms and some on her ankles (this
 is done mostly by favorites). Finally some wear kouaba, ornaments
 most often worn by old women.

The number of wives or napagha varies according to the im-
 portance of the naba and especially according to the desires of
naba. According to the 1926 census, the present Mogho Naba had
 thirty-seven wives.

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587 It should be said that the napagha, who is regarded as a piece of property, is part of the estate of a deceased chief. The new naba takes some of the old and young wives, and the rest are kept in the family of the nabissi. It is therefore not unusual to find women in the household of a naba who have been married to two or even three deceased chiefs. If they are not too old, they may give birth to children of the chief who is their second or third husband.

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595 The establishment of a naba is often divided into three sections.

1. The zagkas sanga (the great house). All the old women, the unwanted ones, live here. Their mistress and guardian is the pugtiéma, who has charge of the house where the kimsé or manes of the ancestors live.

2. Zagbilin. The middle-aged women [163] who are still occasionally visited by their husband live here.

3. Dogoundba. This is the assemblage of several young and beautiful wives grouped around the favorite. They are called dogoundba, "guardians of the hut of the naba." These women receive all the favors, wear the finest ornaments, and are dressed in godé (1). Most of the time the dogoundba live in one or several

1. A skirt that is highly valued among the Mossi.

huts, depending on their number.

Each of the women in the other two sections has her own hut.

Since the naba has too many wives to be able to look after all of them, they must provide their own clothing and food. Hence, they are forced to cultivate plots and sell some of their produce. Each napagha has her own small field of millet, peanuts, beans, and peas.

[357] The dogoundba have a collective plot. They help their husband who not only has to feed them, but is also required to support the sogoné and the samand'kamba (the latter are "people of the outer courtyard," another category of servitors who are sent on errands to the villages or who serve as grooms).

In the homes of the kombemba (plural of kombéré), it is the duty of the dogoundba to prepare food for the sogoné and for any

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595 foreigners who are being housed by the naba. [164]

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595 Each sogoné or samanbiga chooses a mother from among the wives of the naba (only those in the first two sections).

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357 He helps her to cultivate her plot of ground and receives in return a little food over and above the ration of sagbo given to the sogoné as a group.
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At Nanore (1), for example, it was formerly the rule that

1. Canton in the administrative district of Koudougou.

when a woman brought some sagbo to her adopted son, she could not simply hand it to him. Instead, holes were dug in the courtyard of the naba, into which the woman put the sagbo and sauce. Then the young man came to eat the food, and later the woman came back for her bowls.

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595 Finally, it is still forbidden for anyone to play a guitar when a napagha is passing by unless the player is the naba himself or
533 someone called upon to play by the naba. It should be noted that
687 the Moaga prefers the guitar for intimate occasions. Therefore, to
832 play it when a napagha passes by is actually to court her.

The Pogsiouré, or the Recruitment of Sogoné and Saman'kamba

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562 Aside from a few special cases limited by custom which we shall presently describe, the naba can never dispose of the daughters of his subjects, either to make them [165] his own wives or to bestow them on someone else, without the permission of the parents.

Pogsiouré comes from pog', the diminutive of pagha, "woman," and from siouré, diminutive of sioubo, "to give anticipating a profit."

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431 As a result of family quarrels or even voluntarily, a Moaga "may give away his daughters and those of his brothers and close relatives to the naba." It is obvious that the naba cannot keep all of these girls, so he gives some of them to his brothers, his uncles, his sons, and even to ordinary Mossi who have done him a service.
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In the same way -- and this is more frequent -- every sogoné (page) or samand'biga [singular of samand'kamba] (bodyguard or

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431 groom) who has served his naba satisfactorily receives, at the
643 time he is freed, a young girl who may be nubile, but who may,
on the other hand, be just a small child.

In either case, the former servitor is required to call upon the naba from time to time and to take him gifts (cowries or roosters). If the girl is still living with her relatives, in addition to his trifling presents to the naba, the fiancé may make a few presents to his in-laws, although it is not obligatory.

562 Pogsiouré. The first daughter born of a marriage between a
643 Moaga subject (former servitor, son, brother, or uncle of the naba,
644 etc.) and the woman given to him [166] by the naba becomes the
858 "property" of the latter with full rights over her. She is known as
"the daughter of the pogsiouré" and is fated to become pogsiouré
in her turn.

643 If the first-born is a boy, the naba may bring him to his
644 court as soon as he reaches the age of discretion to make him either
858 a sogoné or a samand'biga, and the child's father cannot make the
357 slightest objection.

This does not imply that under Mossi law the sogoné and samand'kamba must be children of the pogsiouré. As absolute master of all his subjects, the naba can recruit his servitors throughout his domain as he needs them, with no opposition by the Mossi to this recruitment.

644 The fate of the daughters of the pogsiouré. The girls are
858 taken from their relatives as soon as they are old enough to work
562 and are entrusted by the naba to his own wives.

The latter, for all practical purposes, become the adoptive mothers of these children and, as such, see to their food and clothing. This does not prevent the real mother from bringing cowries and clothing to her daughter, and to make sure that the child will be well treated by the napagha (wife of the naba), she sometimes [431] even brings the latter a gift of kalgo (soumbala) or karite butter (kamé).

[594] When the girls reach puberty, the naba chooses the most attractive for his fiancées, and the [167] others are given to some of his administrators or to his own relatives.

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644 Rights of parents over their daughters. Although, as has already been noted, the parents retain the right to help their daughters in small ways, they may not, under any circumstances or pretext, break off their engagement nor prevent their marriage. Still less can they promise the daughter to a third party or expect any sort of gifts from the naba.

Later on, in the event that there is agreement between the parties, the husbands may give trifling presents to their in-laws, but there is neither obligation nor coercion to do so.

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558 Exceptions. Girls given to the marabouts by the naba are considered a kind of alms (saraka), and any children born of such unions belong to the true fathers and may not be disposed of by the chief.

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858 Disposition of boys. Boys recruited as sogoné or samand' kamba are required to serve the naba faithfully, but they continue to belong to their real relatives from whom they annually receive cowries and particularly the fougoibga (blanket).

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661 Although the sogoné are regularly fed and clothed by the naba -- because [168] a naba must always be surrounded by many pages -- this is not done for the samand'kamba. In many cantons and especially in Ouagadougou at the emperor's court, they receive only a meager pittance every two, three, four, or seven days since their role as "vagabond" or groom is supposed to provide them with ample opportunities to rob or rather to pillage the natives. During the winter the grooms and other samand'kamba go out into fields of maize and millet at night or in the morning, and there is general looting. As for any fowl lingering in the karaga (fields of millet near the huts), they are killed and hidden in the bundles of hay used to feed the horses. There are exceptions to this rule: some ministers of the emperor and canton chiefs give their samand'kamba at least one meal per day -- at night -- and during the winter, because they are doing field work, they are given cooked beans or sagbo (millet cakes) at noon.

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608 In general way, however, it may be said that this type of servitor is not supported by the naba. Like the sogoné, the samand'biga chooses a mother at the court of the naba. He helps her cultivate her plot and performs other small services for her (weaving her clothes,

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357 for example), and in return the adoptive mother gives him a bit of
608 food, over and above his regular ration.

644 [169] In view of these circumstances, those who are not required
357 at the home of the naba to care for the horses or for some special
565 service spend half the year with their relatives.

644 It is perhaps of interest to point out that the samand'kamba are
357 mostly sons of the chiefs of villages of nabissi (sons of naba), sons
565 of nakomse (descendants of naba and nabissi), and sometimes even
sons of canton chiefs at the court of the Mogho Naba. There is also
the child of the ordinary Moaga, who was not made a sogone be-
cause he was not thought worthy of the position. The rigorous dis-
cipline required of the former young men teaches them "to suffer-
in order to be able to command."

644 Anticipation of freedom. If the sogone or samand'biga is the
357 eldest son and is old enough to marry at the time of his father's death,
the naba is required to free him, even though the period of obligatory
service has not been completed.

643 Another custom, the zan-boko. There is another curious custom
844 among the Mossi. If during the course of his journeys the naba stops
584 in a village and during his stay a girl is born to a local Mossi woman,
the child is his, with full rights, if he has been told of the birth.

However, the naba often knows nothing about the event, and the
father takes care not to speak of it and then makes whatever disposi-
tion of the child he wishes.

644 [170] This custom, however, is practiced to its fullest extent be-
584 tween Mossi. A Moaga sana (stranger) passing through the village is
invited by the elders to dig the zan-boko (hole in which the placenta
must be buried). This is his zounogo, "opportunity." He gives a
few cowries (100 to 200) to the head of the family and becomes the
fiancé of the baby girl. Later on, when she reaches puberty, the
man will make the customary gifts to the parents, and nothing will
stand in the way of the marriage.

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Chapter 11

Marriage, Birth, and Death

Marriage

000 In this chapter we shall review all aspects of marriage throughout Mossi country. The customs are the same everywhere, ranging from the marriage of girls reared in the household of the naba to the institution of concubinage. We shall first deal with the most common forms of marriage, then discuss the matter of bride price, and finally conclude with a discussion of the social status of the Moaga woman.

582 Girls are married between the ages of seventeen and nineteen. With certain rare exceptions, a girl of sixteen or eighteen is never sent to her husband. Such an age is considered very unfavorable for child-bearing, and it is even thought that children whose mothers are too young will not survive.

[1843]

Young men marry between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five.

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562 Marriage of a girl reared in the household of a naba. Girls born of the marriage of a woman given to a former servitor by either province or canton chiefs became by right the property of the latter. These girls are taken from their parents when they are old enough to do some work and are entrusted by the naba to his wives. They are henceforth regarded as betrothed to the naba and are obliged to submit to all of the conditions of servitude which are imposed on the other wives.

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When they reach marriageable age, they may be given, without either their own or their parents' consent, to freed servitors or to any individual who may have rendered some service to the naba.

This is the first type of forced marriage.

Marriage of a girl given by her parents. Since the girl is regarded as simply a "thing," a being without volition, she may be promised at birth. Very often gratitude for hospitality or the existence of an old debt is sufficient reason for promising a daughter.

582 When the girl reaches marriageable age, she usually finds herself
584 with a husband who is sometimes older than her father and whom she cannot possibly love. She must go to him, however, since such is her father's will.

[173] The fiancé brings some gifts (cowries, chickens, millet
beer) and claims his wife. The girl is sent off to her husband's home with no ceremony being performed.

This second type of forced marriage has the parents' consent.

587 Marriage by inheritance. When the head of a household dies, the
428 women, who are considered a part of his estate, are divided up just
562 as is the rest of the property. They are apportioned to the sons of
768 the deceased, or his brothers if the sons are not of marriageable age. However, unlike the procedure for a chief's estate, in which the wife is just a "thing," these wives may choose their husbands from among the members of the family.

This is semi-free marriage.

587 Besides the type of marriage which we shall later call "free marriage" -- a form which occurs very frequently since it includes the marriages of loose women who may have as many as nine husbands, only stopping at the last one because of old age -- there is also remarriage due to successive widowhoods. Some women are so
[177] unlucky as to lose [174] a succession of husbands. They are finally avoided like the plague since they have the reputation of being cursed by the gods (Mossi, kombwina; Bambara, térédiougou).

584 Marriage after a conventional proposal. When a young man wishes to ask for the hand of a young girl who is not yet engaged, he chooses as his go-between a person who is on good terms with the elders of the girl's village. If the response is favorable, the young man brings a chicken, a secco (dagnopinri) [coarse matting] to close the doorway, and some fagots. He goes back to his village and returns at intervals bearing sprouted millet or millet beer and a chicken for the head of the family. The latter at last tells the go-between: "Tell X... that we accept him as our son and that we shall try to give him satisfaction as soon as possible."

Some time later the young man returns once more with a chicken, sprouted millet, or beer for the elders of the village. He makes

584 visits and presents a few small gifts. This state of affairs goes on for one or several years. Finally the head of the family calls together his little council and makes known his intention of giving So-and-So's daughter to X... from such-and-such village. There is seldom a refusal since he has sole authority to give the girls in marriage. The young man is then sent to make the acquaintance of his prospective in-laws. As soon as he is presented, he makes a small gift (usually [175] 100 to 1,000 cowries are given).

If the girl is the oldest daughter, her fiancé is expected to bring a sheep, a hoe, a guinea hen, and some beer.

585 The young man is then told the date on which he may send for his fiancée. He has nothing further to do, except to make some preparations and to wait. When the girl is brought to him, he kills some chickens and a goat if he has one, and he has food prepared for the girl's escort. He must also give cowries to them, the amount depending on his own resources.

In many villages the girls married in this way never leave their husbands for fear of being cursed by their parents and condemned never to see their native villages again.

574 Finally, if the wife gives birth, the husband sends a chicken to
851 the village elder and the wife goes there to visit.

787 Girls who are hostile to a husband. These are girls whom the
584 soothsayers point out as hostile to a husband.

Although these girls are promised at an early age, just like other girls, they must not know that they are engaged, and if their fiancés should by chance come to visit, they are treated like ordinary guests who have just happened by.

583 When such a girl reaches seventeen, her fiancé arranges with her family to send her to the waterhole, the well, or the nearest market.

[176] The fiancé selects a group of his strongest friends, plies them with beer, and sends them off with instructions to abduct his fiancée on the way. The latter, accompanied by a woman or by other girls, is surrounded unexpectedly and seized by strong arms despite the resistance, often quite vigorous, of her brothers or her companions. She is then taken to the home of her husband.

A few days later some people are designated to take the girl's effects to her husband's home and to receive the traditional gifts.

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[586] Free Marriage. The only marriage which can be called free, since it is accepted by both parties, is that of a woman who is unable to endure her first husband and leaves her village with the intention of becoming a prostitute. Divorce is quite rare because the Moaga does not readily agree to it. As she passes through a village, she asks for hospitality, and the news soon spreads that a "free" woman is staying at such-and-such a place. The young men hasten to her and seek to win her favors. Gifts are sent to her, and her hostess is used as go-between. Nine times out of ten, the woman accepts the candidate preferred by her hostess. After some questions concerning his origins and circumstances, one of the young men is accepted as a temporary lover. His comrades come to his aid, and for a few days there is a veritable festival in the village. There is a slight change in the [177] regular fare, since meat is added to the mush; chickens, raised with considerable difficulty, are used for this special treat. This semblance of marriage is thus celebrated. As has been pointed out, however, there has been no divorce, and the deserted husband soon learns the whereabouts of his wife. As soon as he finds out what village she is in -- it may be 100 kilometers away -- he promptly sets out, carrying in a sheepskin enough ground millet for the journey and 500 to 1,000 cowries. He also carries a rooster which, along with the shells, will be offered to the chief of the canton where the lover lives, to whom he will make his claim.

[578] Unions of this sort give rise to three-quarters of the quarrels with which the canton or province chiefs have to deal. A young Moaga who desires peace of mind never regularizes the situation by a so-called marriage even though he may not be able to resist the temptation to harbor the woman for a few days. In any event the affair is easily broken off since sooner or later the woman, eager for change, will want a new lover.

583 Thus, it may be said that although forced marriage has the disadvantage of having a girl marry without her consent, still it also has advantages and a degree of security because the woman, fearing [178] her parents' wrath, rarely leaves her husband. Furthermore, this type of marriage is vastly preferable from the standpoint of peace

583 to the sort of concubinage that "free marriage" is, as practiced in Mossi country.

The Situation of the Betrothed Couple during the Engagement

584 Generally speaking, the fiancé is supposed to avoid his betrothed before marriage. They treat each other with a kind of shy reserve.

Aside from the gifts made to the village elders and some cowries given to the future in-laws at the time of his first visit, no further demands are made on the fiancé.

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684 The young man is formally forbidden to carry on an intrigue with a woman in the girl's village. If he does so, not only may the engagement be broken, but the lover may never again set foot in the village on paid of death.

Breaking the Engagement

584 When an engagement is broken, the gifts received need not be returned. On the other hand, the death of the girl is not regarded as breaking the engagement; the family must, sooner or later, offer another daughter to the young man to replace the girl who died.

An engagement may be broken [179] automatically in case of adultery, discussed below, or in the event of a quarrel between the two families.

Marriage Between First Cousins

582 Marriage between first cousins is not allowed. There can be no valid union between the children of a brother and sister, between a man and the daughter of either his father's or his mother's brother.

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751 However, it sometimes happens -- inadvertently -- that a girl who has been given in marriage in a very distant village may find that her husband is a descendant of a great-grandparent (maternal or paternal) in the same family as her own. Had this been known, the marriage would not have taken place. Ordinarily, distant relationship is not discovered until long after the marriage, after complicated genealogical research. In that case, one of the pair, usually the wife,

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751 wears a bracelet made of copper and iron intertwined, kalembanga, which is believed to protect the wearer against any disaster due to the technically illegal marriage. The kalembanga is also believed to protect the children born of the union from sudden death.

Polygyny

595 Polygyny is the rule throughout Mossi country. It is true that the number of wives varies with the resources and position of the individual. Mere heads of compounds who are somewhat well off may have [180] from five to eight wives and numerous fiancées. The [584] latter are usually reserved for the dakompa (older sons and younger brothers of the head of the family), assuming that these men will in turn render real service and be completely devoted to the head of the household.

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[584] There are many reasons for the practice of polygyny, but the main one is procreation. The under-nourished natives must rely on the mother's milk to feed their babies and must therefore wait two or even three years before resuming sexual relations with a wife who is a nursing mother. Therefore, they prefer to have several wives.

Consummation

585 When the young girl is taken to her husband, she is entrusted to a woman whom she will henceforth treat as "mother."

A few days after the departure of the cortege, whose composition we shall describe presently, the man claims his fiancée. She is taken at night to the nuptial hut, which has no special features, and no one is present at the consummation of the marriage. In this respect the Mossi differ from the Bambara, who have a griot or an old woman accompany the couple to help the young man, if necessary, overcome the girl's resistance.

It goes without saying that if the girl is found to be a virgin, the [181] husband is overjoyed. If she is not a virgin, the love which he may have felt for her before possessing her is much diminished. The man shows the girl his anger, certain that she will at least tell her mother about it.

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The following morning the new wife returns to the hut of her "mother." She is summoned by her husband several nights in a row before he resumes the practice of receiving each wife in turn.

The Bride Price. The Basket of the Fiancée

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Bride price. Mossi custom does not require a bride price. The one thousand to several thousand cowries that are required, depending on the man's resources, plus chickens, a sheep and beer, are not a bride price, properly speaking, or "selling a daughter." Nothing is asked which could not be repaid one day without too much difficulty.

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The fiancée's basket. The basket of the fiancée contains the girl's clothes, some soap, some karite butter, some cowries, gourds, and ladles. The basket is carried by one of the women in the cortege.

The cortege. The fiancée's cortege is usually composed of a young girl, a woman who has borne children, and a boy.

They proceed to the house of the village elder. [182] The relatives of the bridegroom provide food for them for several days. Finally, they are given a farewell dinner consisting of baskets of millet cakes and mutton, goat, or merely some chickens. They are also given cowries.

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In addition to these gifts, the sum of 444 or 1,400 cowries (the "virginity price") is sewn into a sack and sent to the girl's mother. If the bride was given by a chief, he is entitled to from 2,000 to 3,000 cowries if the husband is an ordinary Moaga, 10,000 to 50,000 cowries if the husband himself is a naba. In this last case, the women in the cortege receive skirts, and the boy, a robe.

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Note. While it is true that among many peoples a girl goes to her husband joyfully, it is quite the contrary in Mossi country. There is a real struggle to separate the girl from her parents. Many lose sleep and their appetites. On the day of departure they weep bitterly, and those who do not are insulted by the old women.

Social Status of the Moaga Woman and Work Assigned to Her

562 The Moaga woman is regarded as a veritable beast of burden. Household duties and the weaving of cotton for her own and her husband's clothes are not her only occupations. [183] She helps her husband cultivate the family field, and she has her own plots for peanuts, beans, etc.

She endures wretched treatment and must always submit to her husband's whims. She enjoys no consideration whatever and is never called upon to give an opinion. The husband alone rules the home.

[82] If she is so unfortunate as to have no children, she is regarded with scorn. She carries the loads when a move is in progress. A basket and a pyramid of gourds containing her effects and those of her husband are balanced on her head, while the husband canters beside her on a horse or takes his ease on a donkey. If he is afoot, he carries only his quiver, his arrows, his bow, and a club.

[482] To be sure, the Moaga woman may express in unpleasant words her resentment of the maltreatment to which she is subjected, because the Mossi admit that she has no weapon other than her tongue. This is what is meant by the saying, "A woman's mouth is her quiver."

Conjugal Life

834 Interdictions and permissible acts. The couple is forbidden to have sexual relations at the following times.

834 1. For a period of not less than two years and a half after the birth of a child to safeguard the baby's life. Indeed, it is believed 853 that each child comes into the world with its own supply of milk, and if another child were to be conceived during the nursing period, [184] the first would die because the milk of the newborn child would be fatal to him.

834 2. During the menstrual period. The reason for this prohibition 841 that the husband's fetishes and charms lose part of their "power" after relations at this time.

834 3. A pregnant woman visits her husband during the first six or 843 seven months. All relations then cease until some time after the delivery, as indicated above.

843 4. A pregnant woman must not step over her husband; this would make him ill.

833 5. The sexual act may be performed with impunity in the courtyard of a dwelling (at night). Otherwise, it is expressly forbidden to do it outside the house and in any way other than lying on a mat or Peulh secco, in any case never directly on the ground.

845 6. The delivery will be difficult and complicated if the child was conceived in adultery. If the woman is to be delivered, it is 837 absolutely necessary that she confess the name of her accomplice 847 in the presence of witnesses. In this case, if the husband demands it -- and he always does -- the newborn child is killed by the erring wife immediately after it is born (1). [185]

1. The procedure is as follows. Some young mothers simply twist its neck and strangle it. Others put the baby in a jar of lukewarm water. The baby instinctively drinks and finally drowns.

837 Adultery. Before the arrival of the French, adultery committed 684 by the nakomsé (descendants of naba) was punished by the death of the guilty couple. Among ordinary Mossi, the culprit was simply banished from the family.

However, if the lover was not a relative of the woman's husband, he was forbidden henceforth to come to the village where the woman lived. If he failed to observe this rule, he risked being killed.

837 As a general rule, a Moaga woman takes a lover in a village some distance away from her husband's village and not far from her own. When she asks her husband's permission to visit her family, she profits by the opportunity to spend some time with her lover or to let him know that she is going to her parents' home.

Dissolution of Marriage. Divorce.

586 A divorce may be imposed by a husband who no longer loves his 842 wife, but neither ill-health nor sterility may be invoked for the purpose. In the latter case, it is simply assumed that God does not want the woman to have children. She is often regarded with scorn, but sometimes no attention is paid to her lack of children.

586 The new husband of a woman who has been deserted does not [186] and cannot maintain any relations whatever with the former husband. In any event, the latter would never agree to see his successor, even though the divorce had been arranged with his consent. Besides, the new marriage is often contracted in another village.

The Question of Nationality Among the Mossi

641 In Mossi country the child takes the father's nationality, and any child born of a Moaga subject is himself a Moaga.

593 Any child, male or female, is under the authority, first, of his father and, above him, of the head of the family. A mother may never, under any circumstances, give her daughter in marriage.

641 If a Moaga woman happens to marry a foreigner, she does not acquire her husband's nationality. In the same way, a foreign girl (a Bambara or a Djerma, for example) does not lose her own nationality when she marries a Moaga. In the eyes of her husband's relatives, as well as the rest of the populace, she remains a foreigner, required to practice the customs of her husband but nevertheless a foreigner.

Thus, when a Moaga subject chooses to emigrate, the nationality of his children who remain in Mossi territory, whether minor or of age, does not *ipso facto* change.

A legitimate child takes on his father's nationality [187] even though the foreign-born father may have a Moaga as his wife.

Children born of a Moaga father and either a Moaga or foreign-born mother are Mossi.

[848] As for illegitimate children, they take the mother's nationality unless they are recognized, and this can be done only if the mother marries before the birth of the child.

If the child has not been legitimized until after his birth, he will sooner or later suffer from the omission, since his bastard origin will not long remain a secret.

Loss of nationality. The Mossi may lose their nationality only under the following two conditions.

1. When the Moaga subject has been expelled from his village for some serious crime, sent away by his relatives, and no longer regarded

641 as part of the family.

641 2. When a Moaga emigrates and settles permanently in a for-
167 eign country, either to take up trading or to study the precepts of
Islam. He is forced to abandon his usual customs and to scorn an-
cestral ways, thus losing his personal status. If he wishes to embrace
Islam, he changes his name, and if he should return to his native
village, he would no longer try to be identified as a Moaga, whose
customs and beliefs he no longer shares and whom he now regards as
an inferior.

641 [188] As has been noted, the Moaga woman who marries a for-
eigner or the foreign woman who marries a Moaga subject retains
her own nationality. Thus, marriage does not involve any loss of
nationality. Customs may have been modified, but it is certain
that even a Moaga woman who had lived abroad for a long time
would soon resume the customs and practices of her own country.
The same may be said of a foreign woman who might divorce her
Moaga husband and return to her own land.

Naturalization. Since naturalization is unknown, children born
in Mossi country of a foreign father and either a Moaga or a foreign
mother remain foreign. Furthermore, since children take their
father's nationality, a divorce will not affect their status.

II. Birth

842 Conception. The natives have no very well-defined idea of the
776 process of conception. In their minds, the primary cause is God
(Wenam), Master of Heaven and Earth, who gives children. It
seems, however, that Wendé or Wenam forces the kinkirsi (spirits)
to change into a human egg when the sperm is transmitted at the
time of ejaculation.

The kinkirsi are invisible beings said to resemble small children
and who live near certain houses or [189] groves. Only a few favored
persons can see them.

In the same connection, it is believed that ancestors or certain
deceased relatives are reincarnated.

843 Pregnancy. It is known that complete cessation of menstruation
and the development and darkening of the breasts are the signs of

843 pregnancy in a woman. It is also known that the woman will give birth in nine months, but since it is impossible to be sure of the date of delivery, the pregnant woman is watched over constantly and is under the surveillance of the old women. In a general way, nature is allowed to take its course, but some people prefer to consult the soothsayers and the priests and to give alms and sacrifices to avoid a miscarriage.

During pregnancy, women are forbidden to eat honey and, in general, any sweet foods.

Seguene-vando (from seguene, "to wear a skirt," and vando, "leaves, branches"). A few months after the cessation of menstruation, the pregnant woman is sent into the kim-dogo (hut of the kimsé, manes of the ancestors) at the home of the family elder. There she is completely disrobed, and branches are tied around her loins.

844 Delivery. Delivery takes place in the woman's own hut. There is no special preparation. [190] Old women who have had much practice help the mother while others heat water in which to cleanse the newborn child of all impurities.

No one except the old women is present during the delivery.

[842] Women who have not yet borne children are sent away, and for good reason since the sight of the birth process might make them sterile.

Finally, if the afterbirth does not come out at the time of birth or soon after, there are certain special measures taken to hasten its emergence.

846 Three or four days after the delivery, depending on whether the child is a boy or a girl, the mother, who has so far remained indoors, goes out for the first time.

She carries a sickle to ward off ghosts and other evil spirits.

The new mother's co-wives and relatives bring her safandé (soap), kamé (karite butter), and kalgo (soumbala); others give her cowries. The father has a sheep or rooster killed and a millet cake prepared.

[302] The woman who acted as midwife is sent a ball of sagbo (millet mush) and a chicken leg. The heads of the mother and child are partially shaved, and there is nothing else to do but to choose a name for the child. [191]

553 Choice of a name. Among the Mossi, a child's personal name depends on circumstances which preceded the birth or on an important

553 event associated with it. We shall classify children under two headings: 1) ordinary children; 2) children especially sought.

The second category refers to children born after their parents have consulted the soothsayers, given alms and sacrifices, or employed other magical procedures.

Since the ordinary child is regarded as a spontaneous gift of God, his name is given by the father's close relatives unless some recent or remote event requires a name having particular significance.

551 Some examples of common ordinary names are Bila and Poko.

Names having special meanings are illustrated by the following examples.

Passektale (from passek, "insufficient," and talé, "resentment, hatred") means "I do not know what has caused the hatred which is felt for me."

Paratsida (from paraté, "to be unwilling," and sida, "truth") means "enemy of truth," a name intimating that people dislike the truth.

Dimpougoubnoma (literally, dima, "great chief, king"; pougbo, "to follow"; and noma, "profitable, good") is a name given to a child born of a mother given by a chief or one whose father has been given some important gift by a chief just before the child's birth.

842 [192] If a woman has no children after several years, the husband
782 consults the soothsayers, makes offerings and sacrifices, employs charms, and finally resorts to the tinsé ([sing.] tinkougri, from tiga, "earth," and kougri, "stone") or to the tiga (fetish tree). The woman goes with her husband to the possessor of the god. They take a rooster and some cowries. After they explain the object of their visit, the rooster is killed by the priest, and if the offering is accepted, the couple is dismissed with a formal promise that their prayers will be answered.

553 If, in due course, the wife is delivered of a child, the baby must be named Tinga, and his brothers and sisters will be named Timbila, Timpoko, etc., or if the tiga was appealed to, the baby must be called Tiga, and his siblings, Tibila, Tipoko, etc.

775 It also happens that after successive births, the babies die. Since
553 the Mossi, as we have noted, believe in reincarnation, they assume --

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553 that the same baby is returning. So, in order to induce him to remain on earth, they give him a significant name.

One of these is Yewayan (literally, "one who has returned"), meaning "Here he is, back again; it is he once more, and we recognize him."

The same name is used for all members of the same family.

304 Scars. When a child is a year or two old, the family calls in an old woman who draws more or less straight lines on his face (cheeks, chin, forehead, even the nose) with a razor. These marks vary according to region and are not [193] the same, for example, at Kaya as at Ouagadougou.

The design used most often, however, has three straight lines from forehead to chin and one or two horizontal lines running across the nose and joining the vertical lines on the cheeks.

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782 Feeding. If a mother does not have enough milk, she goes very early in the morning to a tree, for example, the kamsaongo or wédega (of the family of gohine lianas), to ask for milk. She falls to her knees, and believing that she is addressing a living person, she makes her request humbly, but with what faith! It appears that the prayer is often granted, but the woman must never again go under the tree or she will lose her milk.

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604 The question of choosing a nurse does not arise in Mossi country unless the mother dies. In that case, the little orphan is entrusted to a sister of the child's father. If she has been a mother, she too goes to the tree to ask for milk, as described above, even if her most recent delivery occurred years before. Finally, if the child thus nursed is a girl and survives, she becomes the property of her father's sister who will give her in marriage, later on, to the suitor of her choice.

III. Death

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554 The importance of funeral ceremonies depends on the age and rank of the deceased.

Nitiema (aged persons). Upon the death of an [194] old man or woman, all the relatives who live in the village are assembled.

764 The body is kept in the funerary chamber for a whole day, and
554 then the burial ceremonies are begun. The eldest son and daughter in the family throw cowries in the tomb (1) so that their father

1. Different types of tombs. Among the Mossi there are several kinds of tombs. The yaobulga (tomb in the form of a well), the highly favored type, is reserved for all those, young or old, who die a natural death.

The sampogyaogo (from sampogré, "wound," and yaogo, "tomb") is rectangular in form and reserved for all those who die following a serious wound, snake bite, lightning, and drowning, or who fall on the field of battle. In these cases there is almost no kouré (funeral ceremony). Only the relatives shave their heads and receive visitors who bring them condolence. There are no celebrations or ceremonies. On the day of the second kouré, a little beer is served to visitors.

or grandfather may buy water "when he is thirsty and pay the tolls on the way to Eternity." The persons in charge of the burial take some of the cowries.

The relatives organize games and dances which go on for three or four days. Finally, everyone has his head shaved, and the date is set for the principal funeral ceremony. On that day, all of the relatives, sons, married daughters, close relatives, and grandsons, bring chickens, livestock, and cowries. All the inhabitants of the village are expected to prepare beer. Livestock and chickens are killed, and the meat is distributed to the people who come for the ceremony. Dances [195] go on for several days, and the dancers, as well as the drummers, receive cowries.

It should be noted that the grandchildren keep their chickens or livestock after slaughtering them and may dispose of them as they wish.

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554 The sinddo is performed only at the death of an aged person. It involves cutting up a living animal whose meat, as soon as it is cooked, is eaten by all the members of the bereaved family.

[187] During this operation a strong person holds the animal's muzzle shut; it is believed that a single cry from the creature means certain death for someone in the family.

The tomb of aged persons has the form of a well at the top; it is rectangular below, or at least wider, so the corpse may lie in it.

Ikanda (married man). The ceremony is much less impressive for a young husband. The deceased is simply washed, wrapped in a Peulh secco, and buried. A few chickens are killed. There are no dances at the second kouré.

Heads of families. After the deceased has been washed, dressed, wrapped in a mat or secco, and [198] laid out on the threshold of his hut (1), the lagda (undertaker) offers him the blood

1. The venré (opening). We have already seen that among the nakomsé a hole was cut through a wall of the house or through the wall surrounding the courtyard and that through this opening the body was carried to its last resting place.

In general, this is done for the father of a family. The body is laid out by the opening, and his eldest son and all his daughters (the daughters of the deceased and those of his brothers) must pass through the opening ahead of the corpse. On this occasion the girls tie branches around their hips in lieu of skirts, and the son removes his loincloth. The children of the deceased are held by the arms and legs and put by turn through the opening, in such a way that their bodies brush against the corpse.

The eldest son, by passing safely through the venré, proves to those present

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that he did not cause his father's death. The daughters who dare go through the opening, even those who are grown women, are greeted with bravos by the crowd. The wives receive generous gifts from their husbands. The reason for this is that no girl who had been pregnant before being led to her husband would dare to pass through the opening because the deceased and other kimsé (ancestral spirits) would strike her dead.

This is why some women disappear at the crucial moment, to the great shame of their husbands.

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The funerary hut is fumigated by burning a certain aromatic plant known as sompiga. The Bambara and the Wolof call it benguefala or benguefira. The same plant was widely used by the Europeans during the recent outbreak of yellow fever, either in an infusion, in a tisane, or mixed with the shower water.

of chickens which are killed at his feet. He pronounces some ritual words which may be summarized as follows: "Accept these chickens and these cowries and do not return; may everything you leave behind profit your heirs!;" etc.

The body is then carried away. On reaching [197] the tomb, the bearers carry the corpse around it three times and then place the body on the ground. The undertaker goes into the tomb and arranges the sleeping place. The mat is removed, and the body is handed in to him. The members of the family and other relatives at once begin to weep as the opening is closed with a stone, and the whole is covered with earth.

The eldest daughter of the deceased and his wives cover their bodies with ashes. The pugtiéma (first wife) and the eldest daughter wrap leafy branches around their waists, and the rest of the family wear vines on their foreheads. This is the first mourning.

Forty or fifty days later the second funeral ceremony is held, accompanied by various games, the playing of tom-toms, killing

764 animals, beer, etc. (see the description above). This is the
554 second mourning.

Dakonré (bachelor). Only his father and mother shave their heads. He is wrapped in a Mossi secco and buried without further ceremony. He is not even washed.

Bi-kouré (funeral for a newborn child). If the first-born child of a young mother dies, the girl returns to her family and remains there for thirteen days. Then she comes back to her husband, accompanied by some of her relatives. The latter bring chickens and guinea fowl to be served with the millet cake brought to the girl's husband. In return, the husband has chickens and guinea fowl killed and millet cake prepared, thus making an even exchange with his in-laws.

[198] Custom requires that the girl's relatives spend a night on the road before returning to their village. Even if their village is quite near they spend the night in the bush.

It should be added that if a second child dies at birth, there is no kouré.

Pagh'sin kataré biga (childless woman). There is no ceremony. She is buried in the same manner as the bachelor.

The Existence of God, Heaven, and Hell

776 The Moaga believes in the existence of a superior being, invisible or visible (the sun has long been considered as a "god" by many of them), who created the heavens, the earth, and all living things. This being is called Wende or Wenam (from wende, "world," and nam, "chiefdom"; thus, "Master of the World").

Although the Moaga sometimes attributes his misfortunes to the evil spells of his enemies, nevertheless he recognizes that nothing can be done without the consent of God. Hence he constantly invokes the name in every circumstance of his life, especially when he makes sacrifices.

Even the makers of fetishes, magicians, and sorcerers recognize this power and frequently invoke it.

792 There are certain Mossi who make no charms or fetishes and who are neither Moslems nor Christians. They harm no one, [199] forgive those who offend them, and attribute everything that happens to them -- for good or ill -- solely

792 to divine Providence. These are the mystics.

18 However, the deism of either type is not very deep. All believe that a dead person will rejoin his ancestors and dwell eternally with them. They imagine, however, that "the road to Eternity is hard and the Kingdom of God so remote from the earth that they give cowries to their dead to pay their way through difficulties, the hazards of the journey being directly related to the good or bad actions of the deceased."

This may be said to be a kind of vague notion of a hell or a purgatory. However, this hell is neither the "everlasting fire of the Christians nor the horrible sufferings of the Moslems," since the person is supposed to be with his relatives.

The Alkyoamé. One sometimes hears a Moaga say: "I cannot avenge what you have done to me, but it will be settled on the day of alkyoamé." This is a somewhat superficial notion of a Day of Judgment. The Moaga does not really believe in a final judgment any more than he believes in the end of the world or the resurrection of the body. By the words alkyoamé daré, he alludes to the day when he and his enemy will both die and God will subject one of them to a punishment -- understood to be temporary -- for the harm he has done the other. [200]

Beliefs and Superstitions Concerning the Soul After Death

774 What do the Mossi believe the human being to be? Man is composed of three elements: the visible body, the sigá or toulé (soul), and the kima (ghost).

The sigá, which may be called the soul, is the part of the man which is to return to God.

Sigá. According to the Mossi, the sigá or toulé is easily frightened. A great sorrow, illness, or the death of a loved one can cause it to abandon the body temporarily. It then assumes a human appearance and can be seen by the person himself or by others. In that case, charms or fetishes are used to make it return.

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761 Its temporary absence from the body is not thought to have any serious consequences since this does not disturb the normal functions of the human organism, but, since body and soul cannot

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761 live without each other, its prolonged absence is thought to cause death.

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763 Kima (from ki, "to die"). This is a sort of silhouette of a person who is about to die. It is visible only to certain initiates. It is said, however, to be somewhat deformed, and its presence may make one's hair stand on end or cause shivers that paralyze the legs and make walking impossible.

715 The sigá may be distinguished from the kima in that the latter, being already dead, has its head completely shaved, wears ashes in the form of [201] a cross or X on its forehead, or has its feet stained with blood.

As soon as the person dies, his kima roams around the house for a time and then joins his ancestors at Pilimpikou.

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718 Pilimpikou. Pilimpikou is a village belonging to the administrative district of Koudougou (upper Volta). On a mountain nearby, there is a grotto which is regarded as the sacred place where the kimsé of all the dead Mossi assemble.

Legend has it that any deceased relative may be found again at Pilimpikou if one were so unfortunate as not to have been present during his last moments. One can also go there to find out where the deceased has hidden part of his fortune or some valuable object.

It is said that one has only to go to the Tingsoba of Pilimpikou and ask him to use his influence to call the deceased.

The Tingsoba orders the petitioner not to shed a single tear at the sight of the "ghost," and, the legend goes on to say, if the secret of the interview with the kima is not kept, the person will die within the year.

Finally, it is believed that when the kimsé welcome new members -- they represent the whole family of all the dead Mossi for countless generations -- they organize games whose echoes are heard by the inhabitants of Pilimpikou.

715 Young people of both sexes who were unmarried at the time of their death and newborn children who have died [202] return to that place where they dwelt before coming into the world in order to "return to human form in the womb of another woman or of their former mother." As we noted in an earlier paragraph, the Mossi believe in reincarnation. [203]

Chapter 12

The Penetration of Islam into Mossi Country

Islam in the Land of the Mogho Naba

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711 The Mogho Naba, like his subjects, is above all an animist, and it is hard to understand how he reconciles his fetishism with the complex dogmas of Islam and with the many interdictions of Christianity.

The Mogho Naba, however, is quite capable of being a Catholic or a Moslem on appropriate occasions and at the same time respecting the traditions of his ancestors. Thus, when the Christians celebrate Christmas, the emperor of the Mossi devoutly attends Midnight Mass. He keeps his cap on, however, just as the bishop wears his miter. In the same way he embraces Islam during the following three festivals: the moaghrem (the Mossi zembendé); Ramadan (nolokré, "to loosen the mouth"); and, finally, the zoulhési (the Mossi tabaski or kibsa).

797 Before describing how the Mogho Naba celebrates these Moslem festivals, we shall give a brief history of Islam among the Mossi and discuss the appointment of imams.

The Arrival of Islam among the Mossi

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793 It was during the reign of Naba Doulgou, the twenty-third Mogho Naba [204] after Oubri, founder of the Ouagadougou dynasty, that Islam took root in the empire of the Mogho Naba, and it was at that time that an imam was appointed at Ouagadougou.

Naba Sawadogo, who succeeded his father, Doulgou, sent his children to the Koranic school. Many of them obtained a fairly good education there, and the eldest son, who later succeeded to the throne under the name of Naba Koutou, even became a marabout. The development of Islam in Mossi country dates from his reign, as does practice of giving children of the Mogho Naba Moslem names such as Salfou, Mahama, Moumouni, etc.

791 Gambaga Naba (chief of a vast territory in the British colony
793 of the Gold Coast) was, as we have already seen [not translated],
the father of Nyennenga, mother of Ouedraogo, the real founder
of the Mossi empire. As is well known, any king tends to imitate
an illustrious relative and to follow his lead in all matters which
might lend him distinction.

This being the case, here is how Doulgou happened to install
a marabout at his side. It is said that in addition to his many
ministers the king of Gambaga had an imam whose duty was to
settle all complicated matters. He was, at the same time, an
intimate counselor of the king. Mogho Naba Doulgou, who ruled
over a large territory and who felt that he was just as powerful
as his ancestor, the king of Gambaga, decided that he, too,
wanted to consult only an imam for certain affairs. The emperor
had a friend [205] who was a marabout in the region of Zitenga
and whose name was Moustapha. Doulgou summoned him to
Ouagadougou and conferred upon him the title of Imam.

It goes without saying that neither the learning of this adept
in Islam nor any of his other qualifications were checked and that
he was not chosen by other marabouts. Thus, the Imam of the
Mogho Naba is principally a court dignitary, just like the Ouidi
Naba, for example, and, as such, his appointment involves cer-
tain barbaric procedures. This is why, after he has been given
his turban and his burnoose (insignia of chiefdom) he is invited
to a house called surbinda. In this sacred place he is handed a
[272] gourdful of a loathsome beverage, tibo, a mixture of human and
animal blood, which all canton chiefs, all ministers, and all
court officials must drink at the time of their appointment to make
them incapable of treason or lese majesty. The imam takes up
the gourd and utters the following sacramental words: "I shall
never, under any circumstances, betray the Mogho Naba; I
shall come to his aid in time of war; I shall execute without
question all orders received from my King," etc.... He then
pretends to drink some of the beverage and hands it to the Ouidi
Naba who puts the liquid back into the copper jar in which it has
been kept for nearly a thousand years. Once these formalities
have been completed, he is the Imam of the Mogho Naba. As is

797 the case for canton chiefs and ministers, this position is handed
 793 down in [206] the same family. Obviously a son is not called to
 succeed his father unless he has been educated well enough to settle,
 to the satisfaction of the emperor, the few questions which will
 be submitted to him. In any event, the choice will always fall
 on a member of the family of Moustapha, the first Imam.

Celebration of the Moslem Festivals by the Mogho Naba

796 Moaghrem (the Mossi zambende). The moaghrem marks the
 beginning of the new year of the hegira. Every Moslem family
 must feast on the evening before the holiday. The next morning,
 that is, on the tenth day of the month of Moaghrem [Muharram],
 the sourata, book of the year, is read, and one learns the name of
 the saint who will preside over the destiny of the world for the
 next 360 days. Alms are stipulated. This festival, which repre-
 sents a return to joy, solemnly commemorates the day on which
 the Patriarch, Noe [Noah] (called Nabi Nouhou by the marabouts),
 alone blessed by the Lord, first set foot on dry land after the flood
 which exterminated mankind. This was a return to life, and it
 was the Day of Fire.

The Mossi have never understood the meaning of the Moslem
 festivals and celebrate them in their own way. They did not
 understand that the "Day of Fire" meant a return to family life,
 to cooking food over a fire, but instead made up a curious custom
 which is more reminiscent of the taking of the Bastille. On that
 day they light torches, chase each other about, and burn each
 other. This sometimes results in [207] real injuries which fortu-
 nately are easily healed.

The Silmissi (Peulh of Mossi country) do rather better since
 they sprinkle themselves with cool water. This represents at least
 a wish for good health.

796 The tabaski (zoulhési or Mossi kibaa). In the old days the Mogho
 643 Naba was required to go to the great mosque at Zoaghna on the day
 of tabaski.

Yamaba, chief of the Yarcé (Dioula whose ancestor, Koanda,
 came to Mossi country during the reign of Koumdoumié, the eighth
 Mogho Naba), has the duty of sacrificing the cattle and sheep

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643 provided by the emperor. The meat is distributed among the assembled faithful. The salam took place in the mosque, and on this occasion the emperor became a Moslem whether or not he was actually a believer. He was expected to take his place among the faithful immediately behind the Imam. As soon as the Imam finished reciting verses from the sacred books, he turns toward the faithful, says, "A salama leckum," and then shakes the king's hand. When the prayer is ended, the emperor returns home, and the Imam soon follows to sacrifice the tabaski sheep. The Mogho Naba himself is required to hold the animal's tail.

Ramadan (Mossi nolokré). It is well known that Ramadan or Lent of the Moslems (the nolokré of the Mossi, from noré, "mouth," and lokéré, "untie the knot, loosen") involves a series of privations and abstinences [208] during which the defenceless body is subjected to all sorts of indispositions, sometimes giving rise to real illness.

It is also obvious that the emperor is subject to so severe a regime and to so many obligations that it would be impossible for him to fast, as do the marabouts, even if he were a believer. Nevertheless, the emperor has been so thoroughly persuaded of the yelsomdé (bliss) attained by the penitent after the thirty days of suffering and since he is by no means indifferent to anything concerning the splendors of the Beyond, he asks for volunteers among his entourage who will practice abstinence in his place. On the day of the festival, they receive many gifts (robes, cowries, etc.).

What follows is a summary of the manner in which the king of the Mossi celebrated Ramadan a few years ago.

[22] On the day of the festival, the Gare-yarga (Yarga in charge of the saddle) appears early in the morning bearing hydromel in an old gourd which is said to have been used by Naba Rimba. He drinks a little of the liquid to "break the fast" and then offers a gourdful to the Mogho Naba for the same purpose. The remainder is given to the ministers and other court officials.

The emperor offers food to all present (bowls of rice and sagbo). He has had one or two cows and many sheep slaughtered in advance.

Around seven-thirty in the morning the Mogho Naba used to go with his usual entourage to Roundé-yiri' (a place of prayers, a kind of outdoor mosque which [209] used to be located northwest

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643 of the present house of Ouendasida, the police adjutant), and there he attended the salam presided over by the Imam.

After the ceremony, the Imam, surrounded by the faithful, went to call upon the emperor for the doua (a kind of benediction involving the recitation of verses from the Koran). The Imam received kola nuts and sheep or a cow.

[368] At the present time the two mosques exist in name only; the one real mosque is that of the Imam in the ward of the mohémé (marabouts). The present Mogho Naba never attends the salam on feast days. He goes to the Circle [Administration Building], then to the home of the Governor, and finally returns home to await the visit of the representative of Islam in Mossi country.

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177 The only Mogho Naba who was truly a Moslem was Naba Koutou, the twenty-seventh successor of Oubri. He was sent to the Koranic school at Sagabtenga and is said to have made a creditable record there. When he succeeded his father, he installed a mosque in front of the women's gate. Since then a mosque has traditionally been located in the same place on the palace grounds of every Mogho Naba, even though, as in the case of the present emperor, he was not a believer.

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177 Naba Koutou regularly made his salam in accordance with the rites of the Moslem faith and even observed the thirty days of abstinence during the month of fasting. [2107] All his children had Moslem names. All, except his eldest son who succeeded him as Naba Sanum, were sent to Koranic schools, although none did any serious work there since they were more interested in becoming naba.

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696 During his lifetime, Naba Koutou himself never sentenced anyone to death, even if he were guilty. He loved peace. When his ministers submitted serious cases to him, he always said: "Go and do what seems best and do not tell me what fate was meted out to the guilty." Like Pontius Pilate, he allowed his ministers to bear the responsibility for the crimes. Since he gave little credence to what the priests said of poaré (confession by the use of magic), he acquitted individuals condemned to death by that barbaric method.

The Moslem Naba

797 1. Virtually all of the inhabitants of Nobéré, Nobila, and
771 Toècé (cantons in the present province of the Gounga Naba) are
converts to Islam for reasons of personal convenience. They are
the descendants of Naba Saga, twenty-second successor of Oubri.

2. The inhabitants of the villages of Doundoulma (descend-
ants of Naba Kom, twenty-first successor of Oubri), Garpinné,
and Kouila (descendants of Naba Doulgou or Roulgou, twenty-
third successor of Oubri) are reputed to be devout Moslems. [211]

3. Kombissiri Naba Siguiri, circle of Ouagadougou.

4. Ramongo Naba Baongo, circle of Koudougou. Both of
the above were descendants of Naba Warba nineteenth successor
of Oubri, and were converted to Islam.

The present chiefs of these cantons are educated Moslems
and possess mosques.

5. Sao Naba, a descendant of Naba Ouédraogo, circle of
Ouagadougou, was converted nearly thirty years ago. His first
teacher was a pilgrim returned from Mecca and a native of the
village of Nakamtenga (near Kombissiri). He continued his study
of the Koran under the direction of Sayenouné Bathily, a marabout
originally from Kaédi (Mauretania) who was such a formidable
thaumaturge that the local administration had to send him home
in 1916. Sao Naba has a mosque, but it would appear that the Moslem
religion has not diminished his animistic beliefs since he con-
tinues to make sacrifices to the manes and to drink beer from time
to time (on customary feast days, for example).

6. Gourpila Naba (circle of Ouagadougou) is a former samand'
biga of the present Mogho Naba and his conversion to Islam is
recent, within the last six or seven years.

7. Boala Naba (circle of Ouagadougou) is a devout Moslem.

8. Gaongo Naba (circle of Ouagadougou) is also a devout
Moslem. [212]

[551
871] In conclusion let us point out that the present emperor con-
tinues the tradition of giving Moslem names to his children and
has several of his sons in Koranic schools. There is no doubt that
more of his children are being educated in these schools than in
the official primary school. [213]

Chapter 13

Dwellings of the Mossi Chiefs

342 We have seen, in an earlier chapter under "Labor Duties and
554 Obligations of Mossi Subjects to their Chiefs," how the dwelling
781 of the naba is built and repaired. We know also that the naba
like all his subjects, consults a soothsayer to select the site for
his dwelling. He needs to know whether he should keep his
father's establishment, build a new one on the site of his grand-
father's home, or finally, if the spirits are not favorable, whether
he might build on unoccupied land.

342 The establishment of a naba differed from those of his subjects
554 in former times in the great number of huts included within it.
Also, there was an empty ostrich egg on the roof of each hut.

The sketch which follows shows the home of a naba before
the arrival of the French. Such houses exist even today in certain
areas.

There were no native houses with terraces or clay roofs. To
be sure, the Mogho Naba had one, but although it was copied
from the Djenné style, [214] it had, aside from a few doors and
tiny windows, only a single opening in the ceiling the size of a
canari. This was supposed to admit air to the inhabitants, and it
was blocked up during the winter.

The Ouidi Naba (first minister) and the Kamsaongo Naba
(chief eunuch) also had tata, but they were smaller. The former
kept the sacred water (nam-tibo) and the latter the wealth of his
master, the emperor.

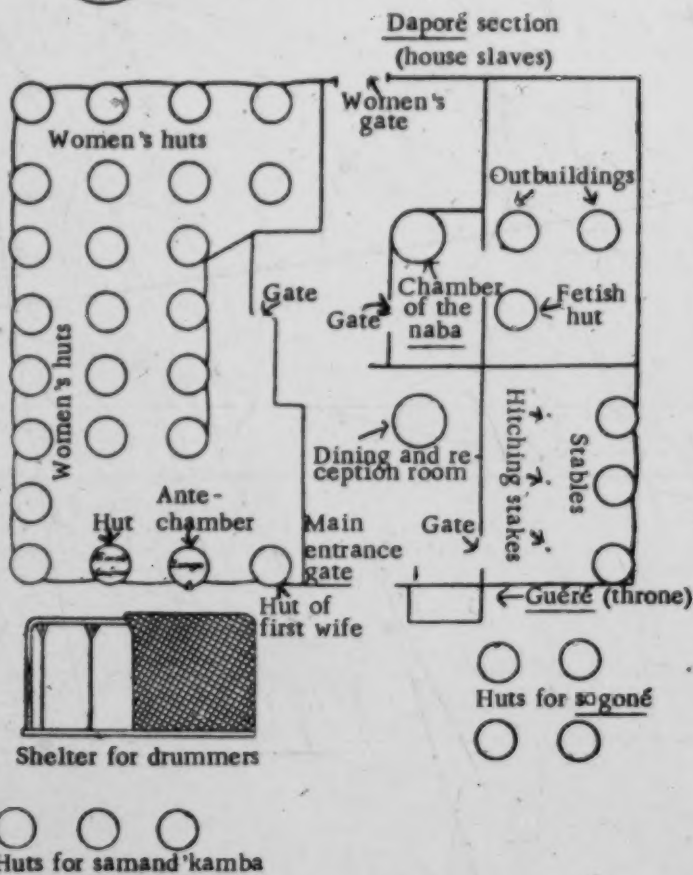
342 A description of the typical dwelling of the Moaga will be
177 given later. At present, especially since the installation of the
[French] government at Ouagadougou, virtually all of the prov-
ince and canton chiefs have dwellings more or less of the European
type. The present tata of the Mogho Naba, the Balourn Naba,
and the Ouidi Naba at Ouagadougou, those of the Konkistenga
Naba at Imasshoro and at Zoétigomdé, and that of the Lallé Naba
at Koudougou -- to mention only the principal ones -- prove that
real progress has been made in housing by the Mossi chiefs.

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Stones for
crushing
millet.



Dwelling of the Naba.

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177 Of course, like all European houses in the region under discussion, these buildings are, unfortunately, made of mud bricks, but is that not the rule in French West Africa?

342 In the homes of those two ministers of the emperor who are most advanced, the reception rooms are arranged in such a way that callers benefit from a constant flow of fresh air through large openings. During periods of extreme heat, a punkah operated [47] by a sogoné in the middle [216] of the room provides air for the panting visitors. The wall, always whitewashed with kaolin, bears an [53] advertisement or two, the picture of an important chief, or perhaps some family photographs, which enliven the apartments a bit. All of this shows a real anxiety on the part of the chiefs to develop along the lines of progress and civilization.

In recent years, some of the notables at Ouagadougou have built houses with clay roofs, not so much to live in as to safeguard their family valuables against fire and theft.

Finally, it should be noted that custom requires every new naba for the first three years of his reign to live in songodo, straw huts, which will be described later. Only then may he build with clay.

Dwellings of Mossi Subjects

342
787 Temporary dwelling. Before building his conjugal hut, the young man consults a soothsayer in order to make sure that the site chosen is not haunted by evil spirits and that he will have happiness and good fortune if he lives there.

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787 Even if the soothsayer finds nothing especially alarming about the site, he always orders a chicken or other animal to be sacrificed or alms to be given. The young man arranges with the village elder [217] or, if he is a [Nioniosse], with the Tingsoba (from tenga "earth," and soba, "master"), to sacrifice the victim.

The Tingsoba goes to the site and calls for two small gourds which contain ordinary water and water mixed with flour, respectively. He invokes all his ancestors and pours the water on the ground, praying God to accept it for His wife, Tinga, who is absorbing it. Then he kills the chicken, saying: "On -- on,

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782 mamé ka koud'ti y a niesmé yé ya saramb' boumbou, yaramb'
boumbou, ti oua ta mamé" (which means something to this effect,
"Accept the offering which I present in the name of X.... He
appealed to me because I am the Tingsoba of the village. I do
not consider myself to be more able than the other villagers, but
this ceremony is a matter concerning our ancestors and I inherited
the position from my predecessors").

The chicken is held with its feet up and head down, so that
the blood mixes with the water having flour in it, and then it is
thrown a short distance away. If the offering is accepted, the
victim will fall on its back. Then it is hastily picked up, and a few
feathers are pulled out and stuck into the slightly coagulated blood.

The chicken is given to the children to be plucked and
roasted on the fire without salt or pepper. A leg is offered to the
Tingsoba, and the rest of the meat is eaten by the family of the
young man.

Part of the liver (saonré), however, is thrown onto the place
of the sacrifice and thus offered to the spirits, [218] the invisible
inhabitants of the place, so they will look favorably on the new
household and help the couple to have children.

It should be noted that the Tingsoba may turn in any direction
to make the sacrifice since no particular orientation is required.

342 A young husband's temporary dwelling is a simple straw hut
made of the branches of a tree called randega. The branches are
stuck into the ground, tied together at the top, walled around the
base with Mossi mats (sougzakpinri), and roofed with thatch.

Permanent dwelling. After a year in the temporary dwelling
the young man starts to build his permanent home if his means
allow it. This is a group of clay huts, joined to each other by
more or less even walls.

The earth must first be dug up, and the soil removed from the
excavation must be dampened and molded into balls of mortar. A
circle is laid out on the site by means of a string tied to a central
stake. The foundation is built to a depth of about twenty centi-
meters. Mortar is put on the foundation, and construction of the
walls is begun. These are always circular in form, and their
dimensions vary. The mortar is allowed to dry before the work

342 is continued, and the process goes on until the hut is completed, that is, when it reaches a height of about 1.65 meters. The house is built without any openings, but when the walls are up, a [219] low door is put in, having the shape of a pointed arch. The interior of many Mossi houses is divided by a low wall, called kogré, which makes the hut very dark. A few small holes are made with the handle of a daba, and these, with the low door, are [726] the only openings. In time of war, the Moaga used to shoot his [751] arrows through these tiny holes. Before the roof is put on, the walls are daubed with wet ashes, a practice which is supposed to guarantee good health for the new inhabitants.

The roof is conical in shape. It is made with poles which are tightly tied at the top with vines. Stiff mats, zarsé, are placed on the poles. They are held in place with fibers and are covered with braided straw. Some twenty persons are needed to put up the roof. The construction of the house is then finished. Only the plastering remains to be done. For this job, the women collect a special kind of earth, boalga, which they mix with manure from cows or horses and then coat the walls with it. When this operation is completed, the women cover the floor with a ferruginous material that is sprinkled with water and tamped down with bits of flat wood called silpama. After the floor has been smoothed down, the sasgo is the next step. This involves covering the surface with a sticky material, boudou, mixed with ground charcoal. This is rubbed over and over with glass sherds or special stones called sassega. The shiny black surface obtained in this fashion prevents the ferruginous material from soiling the family's clothes. Some [824] people sprinkle the finished floor with kanmé, an infusion made of the skin of the nééré fruit, in order to make it wear well.

[220] Construction workers. The master of the house is aided by his own brothers and other relatives in the same clan. He does not request help from outsiders. The women's job is to get the water needed for the mortar.

The earth used in building is taken from a hole near the house, the tan-nako (from tando, "earth," and nako, "hole"). This excavation is later filled with all the waste from the house and ordure from the courtyard. The tan-nako, well fertilized in this manner is planted with maize, and this field is called the kamanga.

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Tools. The only tools used are the sitoiga (native pickaxe) and the wanka (hoe).

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House furnishings. (a) The man's hut. The only furnishings in a man's hut are a mat or thin secco, a bolster made of cotton strips or kapok, a quiver, the club, some arrows, the bow, a large knife (zangoégo), and a spear. Small bags of charms and other amulets hang from the wall here and there, and there is a sort of oval straw basket, pilgou, in which clothing is stored.

(b) The woman's hut. From one end of the hut to the other there are billi, small pieces of wood fastened to the wall to hold gourds, bowls (lensé), earthenware basins (lassé), ladles (soutissi), etc.

In the rear of the room lumps of dried earth, [221] hollowed in the center, hold the vessels, and pots, dougdo, which serve both as storage bins for clothing and as granaries for the produce of the woman's own garden.

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Plan of a compound. As one enters a compound, the huts to left are those of the women and the master's huts stand to the right. Completely outside the establishment, there are one or two straw huts, similar to those already described, which provide sleeping quarters for the dakompa (young men).

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The head of the establishment lives alone. It could hardly be otherwise, since he summons his wives in turn.

The women live with their young children or with girls betrothed to their husband, until, of-course, these girls receive huts of their own.

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Kitchen arrangements. It is exceedingly rare among the Mossi to find a hut used specifically for cooking. The wife's bedroom serves also as a kitchen.

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Ordinarily the husband issues provisions to the wife who is cooking for the family, but there are exceptions to this rule. At Ouagadougou, for example, most of the wives provide the food for the husband. The latter furnishes provisions only during the winter when the fields are being worked.

[222] The wives take turns preparing the food. The woman on duty is aided by her co-wives in grinding the millet on the millstone (néré) of the section, but she alone prepares the millet cake, sagbo.

343 Chicken house and pens. Every head of a compound has a
235 small straw hut for fowl within his establishment. There is also a
231 small round hut of clay for the sheep and goats.

356 Repair of houses. When an establishment is damaged by rain
or is in need of repair, the work is done by the residents (the
head of the family and the dakompa, as well as the father's wives
and brothers) with no help from outsiders. There is no pay be-
yond the usual meals. The head of the family merely says to
the workers when the work has been completed: "N'fa nel tourmtogo,
imaou nian (thanks for the hard work, many thanks for the labor)."

[223] Chapter 14

Mossi Clothing

Dress of the Naba

291 In this chapter we shall examine the various modifications
554 and improvements in the dress of Mossi chiefs.
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1. Before and during the first twenty years of the French oc-
cupation. (a) Zangoego pelga: a large robe made of narrow
bands of cotton fabric, rather expertly woven. These robes, which
are made and embroidered by specialists, used to cost from 70,000
to 100,000 cowries (1).

1. One hundred francs. The five-
franc note is now worth 1,000 cowries.
The silver five-franc piece was worth
from 5,000 to 7,000 cowries, depend-
ing on the fluctuations of exchange.

(b) Karfo: a large robe, dark blue in color, made of the
same material as the preceding (50,000 to 70,000 cowries).

(c) Noufa: a large robe and trousers, made of very fine
fabric in a dark gray color. It had the value of two slaves or
70,000 cowries for the robe and 50,000 for the trousers.

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435 (d) Zag'banko: a colored garment, varying in price between 40,000 and 50,000 cowries.

(e) Baourou ganga: a light gray blanket, valued [224] at 50,000 to 60,000 cowries, which can easily be made into robes and trousers.

[439] All these garments were imported by traveling Haoussa (Zangoéto) and a few Yarcé, the only traders at the time, who bought them in Gambaga (Gold Coast), the only known trading center at that time. As we have pointed out in an earlier chapter, the Mossi knew of no country other than their own.

There were, of course, some naba who wore only rough garments made of cotton strips woven locally.

Headgear. The inhabitants of Béré (a village of the province now ruled by the Gounga Naba) used to make caps, called manfo, which were highly prized by Mossi chiefs (priced at 2,000 to 3,000 cowries).

Some notables wore caps made at Wéogtinga (province of the Ouidi Naba) by the descendants of Naba Zombré, the twentieth successor of Oubri.

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177 2. Modifications and improvements introduced since the establishment of the government of Upper Volta (1919). The various fabrics available in the European outlets and the fine white or blue bazin [fabric] are more and more being used to replace the clothing of former times. [225] These fabrics are made into robes, trousers, blouses, and forkia (this last is a kind of long blouse with wide sleeves, much prized by Senegalese traders). Shirts of every conceivable color and style are hoarded in trunks and chests bought at the commissary or made locally by carpenters trained in European shops.

Many chiefs claim that garments made of cotton strips are heavy and cumbersome and impede walking.

[439] Oriental caps imported from the Gold Coast, dark red velvet hats, and even sun helmets are replacing the headgear of old.

The markatassé and mougou, rustic leather boots made by Mossi shoemakers are giving way to shoes, puttees, and leggings, or to new types of boots and slippers -- the shoemakers of Djenné are now well known among the Mossi.

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177 Finally, many chiefs (particularly province chiefs and digni-
taries at the emperor's court) appear on feast days dressed in
costumes ornately embroidered in gold and silver, products of
Moroccan industry. Two of these ministers even wear with pride
European costumes on these occasions.

Dress of the Mossi Subjects

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[411] Men. The accouterments and weapons of a Moaga who
wished to be admired on festive occasions used to include the
following: the koiglinga and the dandaogo (kinds of long blouses
with sleeves); koursi(trousers) in dark blue; the karfo (seldom
worn, [226] however, because of its high cost); a zangoégo
(large Haoussa knife); a manyanko (cap); a logwaoga (quiver
and arrows); and a boussan-zandé (iron club).

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177 Today he wears the same garments made from cotton strips
woven locally (except the karfo), but it should be noted that
young men who return from the Gold Coast or neighboring colonies
nearly always have clothing made of commercial fabrics. They
may even -- and this often happens -- parade a second-hand over-
coat. In the villages out in the bush, the large knife (zangoégo)
is still worn, hanging from the shoulder by an albolé (ornament).

Some young men, however, usually traders in prosperous
circumstances, dress in the fashion of the Sudanese who live in
cities.

291 Women. A Moaga woman usually had only three skirts: (a)
the skirt worn at home which was her working costume; (b) an
indigo-blue skirt (fou-sablaga) which was reserved for holidays
and for trips to the market; and (c) a white or dark-blue skirt
cloth, trimmed with long fringes -- a kind of bambara dissa --
which she wore over her shoulders or over her head on ceremonial
occasions. She replaced these articles whenever necessary.

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[435] Only the wives of naba and of certain notables [227] were
able to own, in addition to the forementioned skirts, a godé, a
skirt of Haoussa origin and quite expensive (1).

1. Even today it costs between 55 and
100 francs.

301 As ornaments the Moaga woman had only red or yellow copper bracelets and the kindifou (a bright red bead). Even then only women of means could procure such ornaments. The [435] kindifou cost only 50 cowries a bead, but since cowries were monopolized by the naba, notables, and rakangba (prosperous Mossi), the beads were far too expensive for the small resources of the average Moaga woman.

Bracelets made of a special stone (a mixture of gray and white) and called manekagcé (manekaka in the singular) were worn only by the Yarbi (young Yarcé of both sexes). It is said [439] that these bracelets were peddled by the Kibissi (Habé), and they seem to have come from the Timbuktu area.

301 Silver bracelets were worn only by the dimbissi (descendants of dima, that is, the family of the Mogho Naba), by kombemba (canton and province chiefs) and their descendants, and, finally, 554 by prominent persons who were in favor at court.

291 At the present time, especially at Ouagadougou, the women 177 adorn themselves with garments of all kinds (skirts of native material, bazin, godé, and other fabrics, as well as skirts from stores). Some have even adopted the blouse and ample robe affected by [352] elegant Sudanese [228] women. Many now own trunks which replace the sacks formerly used to store their clothing.

291 The Senegalese handkerchief, a head scarf, is now con- 178 sidered absolutely indispensable. In rural areas there is an increasing desire to dress better. More cotton is grown. Girls and women from the bush buy glass beads of all colors when they come to Ouagadougou to work, and they wear them around their necks or around their hips in the manner of Bambara women.

416 Although the "mirror" used to be the clear water of springs and brooks, there is hardly a woman today who does not have one or two mirrors. Finally, a bit of elegance is added to the wild 301 beauty of the women by silver earrings, bracelets, and amulets sewed in a panther skin -- these are becoming a passion with Mossi peasant women.

291 It should not be inferred from the above that the Moaga always feels obliged to wear clothing at home. Any time that he has no need to go out or to visit a friend or relative at some

291 distance from his home, he wears only a benda (loincloth), which does not even cover his buttocks, and a blanket.

He goes about with torso uncovered and likes to show that he is [229] well muscled. When the women are inside their huts, especially when they are engaged in the laborious task of removing the seeds from cotton with their gourça, they pull their skirts up to the hips, making themselves half-naked.

Young girls who have not yet reached puberty and are not yet excised often go about completely nude, unless they hide their sex behind the rags of an old skirt.

Personal Grooming

Ablutions and Care of the Body

515 Married persons and women are fastidious about body cleanliness and therefore have a regular morning routine. This involves washing the face, hands, arms, and legs. During the cool season (end of November to February 15), a little karite butter is added [271] to warm water to soften the skin. Since water is scarce, people take few baths. In villages where there is abundant water, however, the inhabitants bathe two or three times a week.

Unlike their elders, young people and children are careless about cleanliness and may go about all day long without washing their faces. This gives rise, incidentally, to serious cases of [164] conjunctivitis among the children.

Sanitation

312 Drinking water. Water for general use is obtained from
271 water holes created [230] by the inhabitants with dams in order to supplement the wells which often run dry during the dry season. The natives make no effort to purify the water which they often keep for days in containers where mosquito larvae flourish. Pond water is used for drinking. In some villages, however, where the water is actually muddy, the following measure are taken to clear it.

(a) The oil is extracted from crushed peanuts, and the residue is put into the muddy water. It takes about three-quarters of an

312 hour for the impurities and the residue to settle to the bottom of
271 the vessel. Then the water is poured off into another container
and is ready to be used for drinking or cooking.

[B-24] (b) It is also possible to use an additive known as missim
(crushed tamarind leaves). The water becomes clear, but it is,
of course, somewhat sour. Although it may be drunk, it is
[55] ideally suited to cooking since the Mossi add missim (from miki,
"to make sour") even to the water of springs and wells before
they use it to prepare their principal food, sagbo.

744 In the town of Ouagadougou frequent visits by the sanitary
312 officers remind the natives of the necessity of keeping fresh water
in their containers. They are also encouraged to fill in during the
winter the low places holding water where mosquitoes might breed.

515 Laundering. There is no doubt [231] that the Moaga is care-
296 less about the cleanliness of his clothing. There is no shortage of
soap -- karite butter, of which it is made, is plentiful -- but he
believes that frequent laundering will wear out his clothes too
quickly. He also thinks -- which is childish -- that the dirtier a
garment is, the cleaner it will wash. He thinks it completely
ridiculous for clothes to be ironed. It must be admitted that
among the Mossi only a married man can require his wives to
wash his clothes. A mother also takes care of her children's
clothes, but a bachelor is forced to wash his own things. This,
we think, explains the extreme negligence shown by some of them
[66] who let their clothes get dirtier and dirtier. Indolence, alas, is
one of the dominant defects of the native of Mossi country.

514 Toilet arrangements. In general the Mossi have no regular
latrines. Men, women, in short, everyone, simply goes into
the bush. The only exception is the very young children who take
care of their needs on the threshold. At night, especially during
the winter when the grain is fairly tall, grownups themselves go
to the kamanga or karaga (millet or maize field near the living
quarters).

364 When the town of Ouagadougou was made a mixed commune
[Ed., smallest French territorial subdivision, with both French
and native representation in the municipal council], it was possible
to install, at municipal expense, a number of lavatories in certain

364 sections and especially around the market. Now formal regulations require the inhabitants [232] to dig latrine ditches in the compounds, but it will be a long time before the native loses the habit of relieving himself in the open air.

Chapter 15

Mossi Dances and their Significance (1)

1. An excerpt, revised and completed, from a lecture delivered by the author on December 24, 1926.

535 In this chapter, we shall describe the Mossi dances, explain their meaning, and tell of the old beliefs with which they are connected.

Indeed, these dances occupy a place apart in the general category of dances of indigenous peoples.

The latter, for the most part and notably among the Boussancé and the Gourma [Gurma], are only exuberant displays, sometimes exercises in suppleness, sometimes caricatures of the motions of love.

The Mossi dances, on the other hand, are actually performed in accordance with fixed rules. There are three types: 1) dances which we shall call sentimental, known as wennega; 2) dances that are part war dance and part religious, called waongo; and finally 3) funeral dances known as warba.

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533
832 In order of precedence, let us begin with the love dance called wennega. This is executed at gatherings. The lover and his sweetheart -- the latter dressed in black, the ceremonial color -- are receiving their friends. Beer is flowing, and mouths are filled with kola nuts. Soon the musicians strike up [234] their
[534] rustic guitars (kondé) which are accompanied by the beating of gourds. The women sing:

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M' Ba sida talem néré
Talem kan-kaïn, talemnti
Pagh ka zaïd koulogh wa mandé

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"My husband, keep me well,
Keep me in proper fashion,
A woman ages as quickly as gombo [okra]."

In Mossi country, indeed, married women are "kept women."
Other wennega songs include the following:

Kandin bilin koamba ziyob'
Ade kandin bilin koamb' ziyob ya
La Fer-nan dambin yide
Bamb' data pagha piligh' wa rebre y a
Ti prote-mannaie yaoulin pa yaguedin
Koure yanga-yanga karin kouma
f' san katarin kont'me y é
f' san katarin kont'me bif ramodeguema

"Those who work in the circle (subdivision of the circle) (1)

1. In the old days Ouagadougou was
both the headquarters for the Mossi
circle and a subdivision of the circle.

do not know how to chase women. Those in the big circle, the company of the Fernands, are even more ignorant of the art of pleasing. They all want to take off the womens' skirts as though they were unrolling a mat, but they keep their pocketbooks hermetically closed. Wearers of trousers in whose folds hide [235] lice, if you have nothing to give me, at least do not try to take me by force."

F' Nian néré yetta pa nan
logh là
Fola biga ma bé ba
f' ka yi wenin nana y è

"You admire this girl,
Her beauty has won you

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And you do not want to let her go!
Are you perchance this child's mother or father?
You are not the God who created her."

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The wennega consists mostly of back-and-forth movements of the hips in slow rhythm. Various figures are performed, but there is always the same rhythm and the same swaying of the hips. The sweetheart herself begins to dance, a curious fact, since women do not usually take part in the men's dances.

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We have noted that another form of Mossi dance is religious, the waongo. The waongo is a mysterious being, half animal, half spirit.

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Origin of the waongo. Tradition has it that this being was one day found all alone on a plain. Those who first saw him took fright and ran away. They went to tell the village elders, who assembled a goodly number of young men, armed [236] with arrows and sticks, to overcome this strange being.

He was not found at the place where he had first been seen. He had moved some distance away. The villagers surrounded him, and the elders, who had brought him a rooster, began to question him: "If he should be taken to the village, would he hurt the villagers? Would he bring misfortune?" The chicken was then sacrificed, but it is told that the sacrifice was not accepted.

The elders returned to the village and brought back a white rooster (norapelga), a he-goat (boéga), and a dog (bâga). Then they addressed the waongo, saying: "We were perhaps mistaken just now. Perhaps you wanted an animal in addition to the rooster we offered to you? If, by becoming our guest, you can bring us happiness, good health, and children, accept these offerings!" They slaughtered the rooster and the goat and killed the dog. This time the sacrifices were accepted.

[532]

What the waongo is. The waongo consists of a mask, usually representing the head of an animal, and a bindou (a kind of long cloak made from the bark of the béringa shrub which is soaked in water for a long time to blacken it or from baobab fibers).

773 According to tradition, he had beside him a toabga (a kind of
535 magic axe) and a tibo (a sacred object, fetish).
776

The people captured him and put him in a safe place. But of what possible use could he be to them? Nobody knew. [237] He was something unknown and fearful.

One day the people had gone off to hold the kouré (funeral observances) of an old man and were on their way back home. They were warba dancers. They were all singing as they approached the house of the waongo, who came out. The dancers were terrified and ran away. Only one of the singers had the courage to remain behind.

He went on with the songs and the waongo followed him right up to the house of the deceased, and there he began to dance.

From this it was concluded that the waongo had something to do with funerals. Since that time the waongo is summoned whenever an old man or woman of the Nioniossé (soukoaba) dies. He never dances for deceased young people.

[198] Since the waongo or, rather, the soukou is considered to be sacred and to embody a sort of religion which possesses secrets that should not be made known to everyone, a special language -- a deformation of the môré [Mossi] language -- has been invented. It is understood only by the initiates.

535 The waongo dances to the sound of a special tom-tom, accompanied by songs and praises in the secret language. The dance is of no special interest; it involves more or less frenetic movements, such as characterize most of the dances of the indigenous peoples.

[534] The waongo is always accompanied by a circle of young men dressed in a narrow strip of cotton, decorated with cowries, and carrying satchels at their sides. These boys make movements with their heads which [238] are precisely like those made by circus horses. In addition to the tom-tom, flute players (wissé) accompany the dances.

535 We shall now speak of the true funeral dance, called warba.
764 It is performed by men wearing skirts, a kind of net shirt dyed blue, and headdresses made of cowrie shells. A long fringe, weighted

535 with metal and worn around the hips, distinguishes this costume
764 from others. The movements of the fringe follow the movements of the body. It soon is revolving so rapidly that it looks like a top.

Many people, however, do not own the special costume just described, and they merely tie a blanket around their loins. During the movements of the dance, this produces a very comical effect since it looks like the wagging tail of a monkey.

[534] The musical instruments which accompany this dance are long tom-toms (gangando); some of them are narrower at the middle and look like long, thin spools for thread.

The dancers also accompany themselves with tiny metal instruments which are like Spanish castanets.

[789] The dance itself is performed in a circle under the direction of the chief of the warba whose costume is [239] richer than the others. All of the dancers usually wear many charms on their heads (tail of an ox and heads of birds stained with the blood of sacrificed chickens).

[775] The warba proves that the Mossi believe in the immortality of the soul. They believe that the dance is necessary to enable the soul of the departed to join the souls of his ancestors. They hope in this way to earn the good favor of the new spirit.

Thus, this dance has a moral basis. However, it seems that the same cannot be said for the other dances which are performed so widely today.

535 In addition to these three national Mossi dances, there are some other dances performed only by women and girls which are actually exercises in physical culture rather than true dances. We shall speak only of the principal one, the kiguibtobo ("dance of the bumping buttocks").

The kiguibtobo. This dance is performed by a group of women, usually at the beginning of cool weather after the harvests are in. The dancers clap their hands while singers raise their melodious voices. The dance is rhythmic. Two dancers leave the group and take their places in the center of the circle. They go back and forth, and then suddenly at a given point in the song [240] they turn back to back so that their buttocks touch and bump each other in time to the music. The dancers must be equally strong

535 or there will be falls which are inevitable when one of the girls is too robust.

535 Here, chosen at random, is one of the kiguibtobo songs:

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M'Ma ho, ka M'Ma warla y.e
Lebin wa regh'big' tim boudguin
n'di Mossa yarbate ribo

"Mother, oh, my mother,
 Come quickly and take my child,
 For I am going to the next village
 To consume pitilessly the goods of
 these wretched Mossé." (1)

1. Mossi.

[241]

Chapter 16

Agriculture

241 Selection of land to be tilled. As he is wont to do in all im-
 787 portant matters, the Moaga entrusts to a soothsayer the responsi-
 bility of choosing the land to be cultivated. In actual fact, he
 chooses it himself, but the diviner must tell him whether or not it
 is haunted by spirits and what sacrifices are advisable to protect
 him from evil spirits.

The soothsayer always warns him of the presence of spirits (kinkirsi)
 and prescribes the necessary sacrifices and alms.

241 Sacrifices. The new occupant calls for the head of the family
 782 or, if he is a Nionioga, for the Tengsoba, who is in charge of
 sacrifices. The following sacramental words are pronounced:
"A zaguel tib reg' noag'la zom kom kon Naba zidwende, tib kon
zig'tinguin damba, tib kon timpelem, tib kon yarimba, kon
saramba, tib reg'kon zig, kinkirga ta wa me nan-baou ki, on --
on tib reg'koin gnimassem, lass' pogh'bang, lasse zoug'bang,
naore.banga ..." Translation? "On the part of X, I offer this
 rooster and this water with flour to the sun god (Zidwendé), to the

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782 brothers of the family heads who died childless (zig'tinguin damba), and to the ancestors and grandparents. May they see to it that these offerings are accepted by the kinkirsi (spirits of the fields) and that the latter favor X with-[242] good health and large crops of millet and beans."

[787] Once these sacrifices have been made -- if they are accepted, the rooster falls on its back -- the new owner has his land cleared and awaits the winter season.

Field work. As soon as the first rains have come, the owner goes once more to the field and has another rooster killed and offered to the kinkirga [singular of kinkirsi] with a plea for gnimasse (good health) and large harvests which he will consume with new wives and new children (pog'palla, la bipalla). Afterward he sows large and small millet, peanuts, beans, etc.

If the year has been a good one and the Moaga has had fine crops, he is happy and in good time will remember the spirit of the fields. For the moment he is busy transporting the millet to the temporary granary (lourgho).

Threshing millet. Before his millet is threshed, the Moaga must make a sacrifice to the zéiga (threshing floor). The ritual words differ from those described above only in the following words: "X asks that this millet, which he will eat, be good for him and that he eat it in peace and good health with his family." (Kita ri ki wan ne lafi layelsomdé né a zak'ramba.)

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[252] [243] He then appeals to the young men of the village for help in threshing his grain. For the occasion he has a great deal of beer prepared and quantities of beans (benga) cooked. The beans are prepared with sesame (sinni). After the job is done, two children between the ages of six and seven are called, and their hands filled with the bean mixture. They must run around the threshing floor while eating some of the beans. The rest will be scattered to the winds. They must stop three times for breath and look at each other. Then the remaining beans are distributed among the workers. They are also given beer.

423 Do owners retain rights over abandoned land? In order to occupy abandoned land; permission must first be obtained from the former owner, who retains his rights over the land. He may reclaim it at

423 will, and the new occupant cannot make the slightest protest.

It should be pointed out, however, that since land is most often abandoned because it was thought to be unproductive or haunted, there is rarely a claim to it by a former owner. In any event the matter is settled by the interested parties. The local administration and the canton chief rarely intervene in such cases.

423 Owners' rights over fruit trees in cultivated fields. Donsé
263 or néré [locust bean] trees whose fruits contain a yellowish, sweet powder that is edible and [244] whose seeds are used to make soumbala, a fetid condiment much prized by the natives, remain the exclusive property of the former occupant. On the other hand, the tamsé (karite tree) belong to the new owner.

423 This is because the karite tree is found almost everywhere in the bush, while the néré is less common.

425 Rights of the chiefs over cultivated land. As a general rule,
423 since the principle of right by possession is honored among the Mossi, a canton chief will not confiscate without reason cultivated land belonging to one of his subjects if the land has always been occupied by the occupant's grandparents.

When the land is unoccupied, however, or newly occupied, the canton chief may, by virtue of his absolute authority over his territory, take possession, and the new owner may not claim any compensation.

Field Work

241 In principle, a family field is held in common. When a woman
562 grows old, however, she no longer does field work with her hus-
595 band. She has her own field and feeds herself as best she may, since her husband pays no further attention to her and no longer supports her. The work is done by the family as a group, and the size of the field varies with the size of the family.

241 Early in the morning, usually before [245] sunrise, the head
512 of the family wakens the young people. They go out to the field, which may be five to ten kilometers away. Around ten o'clock, the women bring the remains of last night's sagbo or, lacking that, some millet flour which is taken in water.

241 At noon (wend'to souka, "the middle of the day") the family
512 rests in the shade of a tree. There are always some fruit trees in
every field. Work is resumed at about two in the afternoon. At
five the women return home to prepare food, and the men stop
work at nightfall.

241 The sisoaga. When the family fields are too extensive to be
476 cultivated without help, all the able-bodied young men in the
village are called to help with the weeding.

At such a time the head of the family gives several baskets
of sprouted millet to his wives to make large quantities of dam,
millet beer. He also orders them to prepare sagbo (millet cakes).

On the day set for the work, the young men go to the fields,
where their enthusiasm is aroused by singing and the beating of
drums. For their work they receive sagbo and dam. This is what
is known as the sisoaga.

It is a kind of mutual aid, and without this indispensable sys-
tem of solidarity, many fields would remain uncultivated.

[572] It should be noted, finally, that when a person falls [246]
ill during the winter, his friends arrange to cultivate his fields,
sometimes without any pay and simply out of a sense of solidarity.

241 Farm implements. As is the case everywhere in French West
Africa, the natives have only the most primitive implements.
Among the Mossi these include: the wanka or kounri, a hoe or
Bambara daba to cultivate the soil; the sitoaga (small pickaxe)
for sowing; and the laré (ax) to clear the site of brush and shrubs.

463 Other types of work. Aside from work in the fields, everyone
goes about his own affairs. Some make baskets, hampers, and
fans, while others weave cotton strips. It is perhaps of some
[564] interest to note that there is no caste distinction among the Mossi,
326] except for the blacksmiths; each person may practice the trade
that suits him. This is why shoemakers mostly come from among
the nakomsé (descendants of naba).

Food Crops

241 The principal foods grown by the Mossi are as follows.
Kazouf (small white or gray millet).

241 Baningha (large white millet or sorghum).

These two types are grown for food, [247] although the large white millet is especially reserved for horses in well-to-do households.

[262
273] Kazinga (large red millet). As a food the poorer Mossi prefer this to the baningha, but it is more especially grown for the making of dam, millet beer.

[156] Mouf (rice) is sought only by the chiefs, notables, and a few families of dakangba (well-to-do men).

Benga (beans).

Souma (peas of either the small green variety or large white or red ones).

Niouyan (from niouri, "yam"), grown only in certain areas.

Nangouri or sounkama (peanuts).

Pesca (fabirama) [a tuber plant].

Sinni or sili (sesame), grown only by a few people who like it.

Bito (sorrel), used in preparing the sauce served with sagbo.

Mana (gombo [okra]) is also cultivated.

Aside from its food crops, each family has its own plot for cotton (lamdo) which provides for the clothing needed during the year.

311 I am told that fields are much more extensive today than in
178 former times, in spite of the abolition of slavery. This is explained by the fact that many areas supposed to be haunted were formerly left uncultivated. It is said, however, that the Moaga used to grow larger crops since in those days he was closer to the soil.

[248] At the present time there is a lack of farm hands. As [185] recently as twenty years ago, the young Moaga followed his parents to the field as soon as he was six or seven years old. He took a liking to the work at a very young age. Before the French [1494] occupation, the Moaga rarely left his village because of the dangers on the roads, frequented in those days by bandits (usually descendants of naba). People were even afraid to go into the bush alone, [1579] for fear of being attacked, captured, and reduced to slavery.

433 There was little contact even between adjoining villages. At
178 Ouagadougou, no one ventured from section to section unless he had very good reason and was armed to the teeth. In short, everyone

438 made do with what his own village could produce, and there was
178 really no trade in the ordinary sense of the word. The Moaga,
essentially a stay-at-home, depended on the soil for food and
clothing.

241 Only two new crops have been added since the coming of the
177 French: yams (na-niouyan, "chiefs' yams") and white potatoes.

The recent increase in the cultivation of cotton makes it
easier for the natives to meet their tax, and this encourages them
to grow even more.

178 The French occupation has brought many benefits in its wake
(creation of a network of roads, peace and the resulting free cir-
culation among the villages, and suppression of banditry and
looting), but it has also given the Moaga a desire to leave the
country.

167 The extensive recruitment of [249] laborers for the needs of
464 other colonies in the area, for work on the roads, and for the now
obligatory military service -- all of which are accepted reluctant-
ly by the Mossi -- has caused many young men to emigrate.

Some of them set out, for the Gold Coast preferably, without
the slightest means of support. They go to work in the English
colony in order to earn money for clothes. Since they had no
money when they started out, they remain there for months or
even years, and this seriously diminishes the agricultural labor
force at home. It also forces their old and helpless relatives to
cultivate their fields alone.

Besides, so many of them never return!

The Native Diet

262 Sagbo (millet mush) is the principal item in the Mossi diet at
all social levels. Rice, regarded as a luxury food, is eaten by the
[436] naba and notables. It costs from two and a half to three francs a
kilogram at Ouagadougou and is therefore too expensive for most
people. It may be added that it rarely is found in the diet of civil
service employees.

264 Mossi chiefs usually have two main meals a day: a [250] first
meal of sagbo or rice at around nine in the morning, and a second

264 meal of sagbo in the evening.

What we call breakfast is hardly known. Between the two main meals, however, the chiefs have meat grilled or roasted. They are very fond of it and have it seasoned with enough salt and pepper to make it possible to consume the endless number of [273] small gourds of beer which they drink from morning to night.

The Moaga has only one real meal a day, the evening meal. A large millet cake satisfies the day's hunger. If there is any left over, he keeps it carefully for his morning meal. If there is none left, a frequent state of affairs, he makes do with his zompannga, crushed millet diluted with water and sometimes eaten with a bit of vegetable fat or a few peanuts.

He rarely eats any rice, and if he has no sagbo, he contents himself with benga and souma.

261 It is during the festivals that the Moaga eats his fill. At such
527 times the head of the compound kills a goat, a sheep, or some chickens and has sagbo and fabirama prepared, or beans with copious amounts of karite butter. This is the feast. The members of the family stuff themselves to the point where attacks of diarrhea are inevitable. The results of the attacks are all the more serious in that they are never cared for properly.

263 The only seasonings known to the Moaga are kalgo (soumbala),
439 red pepper, okra, and salt. No more than a few years ago, however, before the [251] development of trade in the colony, salt was brought from Timbuktu and Mopti by the Dioula and Yarcé and was so expensive that the Mossi people who lived in the countryside often went for six months without tasting salted food.

241 There is reason to believe that the time is not far off when the Moaga will devote his efforts much more intensively to cash crops, such as cotton, potatoes, peanuts, etc. In this domain, the province chiefs at Ouagadougou have made real progress.

Mogh 'Nab' Kawinré (Threshing the Grain of the Mogho Naba)

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782 Sacrifices. For this ceremony, the emperor summons the Mankougoudougou Tengsoba (a descendant of the autochthonous Nionioissé, masters of the land) to Ouagadougou and gives him a

241 sheep to be sacrificed to the threshing floor (zéïga).

643 The work. After this sacrifice, around two-thirty in the after-
noon, the Kam Naba (a notable in the section of the Baloum
782 Naba) proceeds to the threshing floor with the young men from
Bilbalogo and Dapoya who have been assembled for the occasion.
The operation involves beating the millet stalks with tree branches
cut to form an obtuse angle and called dabandé or soika.

643 When the job is done, the workers depart, [252] leaving the
241 grain to be gathered up another day.

The next morning they return to the field, preceded by the
Bend' Naba (chief drummer), who plays the bouloumbougri
kabse nanamsé to which the other drummers respond with bouroum-
bouroum (the Bend Naba gives the names of the emperor's minis-
ters, recalling the origins of each one, and wishes a happy new
year to Oubri-yiri Naba, "master of the house of Oubri," that is,
to the Mogho Naba; bouroum-bouroum has no special meaning).

Immediately thereafter, the Bend Naba invites the young men
to the warba (funeral dance), which is actually only a confused
stamping on the millet which in the process is scattered far and
wide. Suddenly the drums stop, the signal for a rest. Then the
Kam Naba from Bilbalogo divides the pile of millet into two parts
by tracing a straight line across the center of the zéïga. The
people from Bilbalogo (the section of the Baloum Naba) gather
one half, and those from Dapoya (section of the house slaves)
gather up the other half.

Whether it is a good or bad year, the emperor's harvest is
expected to yield 100 baskets (péog' koabga) full of grain.

The Mogho Naba sends 50 to 70 canari of beer to the workers
and shortly goes there himself. He also distributes two or three
wassé (from waga, load of 1,000 kola nuts) to the ministers and
to the workers.

After thanking and encouraging the workers, the [253] em-
peror returns to his house, escorted by his ministers and all the
horsemen.

643 Mankougoudougou Tensoba then uses wet ashes to make three
241 lines on the ground in different parts of the zéïga. Then he takes
782 a lagha (small earthenware jar) and puts some water into it. He

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782 pronounces a few sacramental words and lightly sprinkles the millet, saying: "Zâbre saga Ybéogo sâga, samb'da kôbo la ka toin sameb'la fi yé (the morning and evening rains may put a stop to the cultivation of the fields, but cannot injure the health of the King)." He next takes a straw broom (sagha) and pulls it apart in order to get a bit of millet to put into the lagha mentioned above. He goes then to the temporary granary (lourgho, granary made of Mossi secco) and walks around it three times. An emissary of the emperor gives him a white rooster (nora-pelga), some beer (dam), and zom-kom (water with flour in it). The priest sits down in the shade of the lourgho and before making the sacrifice pronounces the following words: "Naba Siguiri bad'kom, deghein kon Naba Wogbo, tib reg, kon Naba Sanum, tib kon Naba Koutou, tib reg' kon Naba Baongo, tib kon Naba Karfo, tib reg'kon Naba Sawadogo, tib reg la be kon Nab, gnimassem, la lafi," which means literally, "I offer this rooster, this water with flour, and this beer to Naba Siguiri (father of the reigning emperor) in order that he will persuade the Mogho Naba Wogbo, Sanum, Koukou, Baongo, Karfo, and Sawadogo, to accept them, so that the emperor may enjoy good health and happiness."

The Tengsoba then hands the small quantity of millet [254] which he took earlier to the pugtiéma (first wife of the king) to be made into a millet cake and offered to the spirits (manes of deceased emperors and other spirits of the threshing floor).

643
251 Transporting the millet to the granaries. The wives, daughters, and sisters of the Mogho Naba are alone given the duty of carrying the millet to the granaries (baoré) (1). We have already noted that

1. This baoré granary is made of earth mixed with quantities of straw,

there are supposed to be a hundred loads of grain, even though the harvest may not fill twenty baskets. The number of baskets required by custom is attained by putting a small quantity of millet in each basket.

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241 The millet intentionally left on the zéiga. A little millet is purposely left here and there on the zéiga, and the Kassiri Naba (village chief) takes it for his own use. This signal favor, however,

643 imposes a heavy obligation on the chief. He is expected to in-
241 vite the emperor's principal bodyguards (samand 'kamba) -- and
there are many of them -- to a meal. He is also required to
furnish a basket of millet for sowing the field of the Mogho Naba
when the first rains come.

652 Utilization of the produce of the emperor's fields. As noted
644 in an earlier chapter [255] under Labor required of Mossi sub-
jects by their naba, "the Mogho Naba does not use the millet
from his own field. The produce is used to feed the horses, to
support the pages and samand 'kamba, and especially to make
beer on the festive days known as the tinsé and basgha of the king.

[256]

Chapter 17

Inheritance and Rights of Succession among the Mossi

428 We have dealt with the question of inheritance at considerable
length in the chapter on "Customs and Enthronement of Mossi
Chiefs." We return to the subject because it seems necessary to
clarify certain details of this question which is so important from
the legal point of view.

The opening of succession. The succession is open upon the
death of an individual, but property is not passed until after the
funeral ceremonies (for all that concerns funerals, see the section
on "Death").

Why is there a delay in taking possession of the property? As
we have seen above in many chapters, the Moaga is superstitious.
An old belief has it that to take possession of the property of the
deceased before the funeral is celebrated will bring certain death
to the heir or will cause some calamity for the whole family.

Further, since all the members of the family must be assembled
for the funeral observances, the inheritance is well publicized,
and [257] no one can later claim to have been defrauded.

Requirements for succession. In order to inherit, the following
requirements must be met.

1. To be born before the succession is opened.

428 2. Not to be disqualified for the following causes.

a. Murder of the deceased.

b. Failure to avenge his death. In the old days the son had to avenge his father's death before inheriting his property. At present the term "vengeance" should be understood to mean that he must seek satisfaction for the crime in the courts.

c. Failure to celebrate the funeral.

If the legitimate heir is a minor, his guardian must carry out the ceremony in the child's name.

d. Existence of a will whereby the deceased disinherits the heir presumptive.

Order of succession. As a general rule, property is handed down in the direct line, that is, to the eldest son of the deceased. It is handed down in a collateral line only if there is no son. In the case of certain items, however, for example, the family ferish, the heir is the eldest brother of the deceased.

If there is no heir of the first or second degree, the estate goes to the closest relative of the person from whom the deceased inherited the property.

428 The eldest in the family excludes the others and has sole
431 possession of the property. Custom demands, however, that he hand over to his brothers and uncles a part [258] of the property. Nevertheless, this is a free gift which he is not actually forced to make.

428 In the case of the estate of a naba, the eldest son alone usually
562 inherits all the property left by the deceased because of the heavy
184 expenses he must meet to follow custom when he becomes a candidate for the chieftdom. As far as the women are concerned -- they are a part of the property -- he selects the ones he likes, and the rest are left for the nabissi (sons and descendants of naba).

The same is not true for ordinary Mossi, who have begun to realize that there are advantages in allowing all of the children of the deceased to share in the estate. In the chapter dealing with "Marriage" we have already seen that women were allowed some choice of a husband among the sons of the deceased.

428 In any case, however, the eldest son retains the largest share of the estate, and this is easily understandable in view of the

428 custom which decrees that he likewise inherits all of his father's responsibilities as head of the family.

428 Do daughters and wives share in an estate? Daughters have
562 no share in an estate although their brothers may give them trifling gifts.

Wives never inherit from their husbands. They can only benefit indirectly as the representatives of their young sons. On the contrary, since the wife is considered a piece of property, [259] she is actually a part of the estate to the same extent as the rest of the property left by the deceased.

428 Disposition of an unclaimed estate. Only the canton chief is qualified to inherit the property of a deceased person having no known relatives.

Rights and Obligations Governing Property in the Family

421 Property is owned individually. Individual property is strictly a private matter. The head of the family has no rights over property acquired individually by the women and children or by other relatives under his rule. They may dispose of their possessions as they see fit. A mother may do some trading to provide savings for her children. The head of the family may not use such property under any circumstances without the consent of the true owner.

428 Does a husband inherit from his wife? A husband has no right
593 to his wife's property. He cannot even claim it if she dies childless, since in that case it goes to her own relatives (brothers or sisters) or, failing that, to their children.

428 Aside from their rights in their father's estate, children inherit their mother's property.

[426] When the head of a family borrows cowries from [260] a member of his compound, he must repay the loan with a given time. His own property is inalienably his as long as he lives, and then it makes up his estate, along with his wives.

768 Disposition of a house after death. When the head of a com-
428 pound dies, the establishment is not destroyed. It automatically passes to the heirs, that is, to his sons or, if he has no legitimate

768 heirs, to his brothers. If the deceased was the keeper and guard-
428 ian of the family fetish, it is taken to the home of his eldest brother or to a person designated by custom.

We have seen, however, that the Moaga will not live in a home without consulting a soothsayer. Therefore, if the spirits are not favorable to the heir, the home is turned over to the other sons or to the brothers of the deceased. Besides, in many cases the eldest son is already married and the head of a family and already has his own home. He then lodges his dakompa (young unmarried brothers) or one of his uncles in his father's home.

428 Acceptance or repudiation of inheritances. Consequences.

426 To accept and receive an inheritance involves the obligation to
672 pay the debts and claims against it. Among the Mossi, an inheritance is never refused since a refusal does not free one from the obligation to pay the debts of the deceased. Relatives always collaborate, not because of any feeling for common property -- which [261] does not exist, as we have seen above -- but out of respect for the principle of collective responsibility which has been developed in the interests of public order. Creditors will naturally claim their due first from the legitimate heir, but if the estate cannot meet its obligations, all of the close relatives are jointly responsible.

428 The estate does not include any gifts made to members of the family by the deceased during his lifetime.

Wills. Among the Mossi, a will is always made orally.

In the presence of his relatives -- uncles and brothers -- and of his neighbors, who have been assembled for the occasion, the testator makes known his last wishes to his legitimate heir, who will have full rights as his testamentary successor. However, in the event that the will is intended to disinherit the legitimate heir and if for some reason or other he is not present, the testator will entrust the execution of his last wishes to the oldest member of the family present.

Disinheritance of the heir presumptive. In the presence of witnesses and under the conditions indicated above, the testator explains his reasons for disinheriting the heir presumptive. In the event that the reasons seem insufficient, the witnesses will seek

428 to change his mind. If, however, he absolutely refuses to heed their protests, they will not make an issue of it, but when the time comes to [262] apportion the estate, the testamentary arrangement to disinherit the heir presumptive will simply be declared null and void.

If the heir presumptive was disinherited for any of the causes for disqualification listed above or because he had committed adultery with one of his father's wives or a wife of someone in the family, the estate is given to the next in the line of succession as determined by Moaga custom.

Right to make a will. All who own property may make wills.

Revocation of wills. Wills may be revoked if the testator so desires. He has only to make a simple oral declaration of changed intention in the same manner as that described above.

Chapter 18

Circumcision. Do the Mossi Practice It?

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144 Circumcision is highly esteemed among the Mossi. Some colonial officials, because of their ignorance of Mossi customs, have claimed that neither circumcision nor excision was practiced. One must be able, indeed, to distinguish between the Moaga, the Boussanga, and especially the Nionioga. Although the three groups are related, they have different customs.

304 Circumcision, which is done according to precise rules, is carried out here in virtually the same way as it is among the Kassonké of Kayes.

304
626 The ceremony must originally have been imposed on the Dagomba (of whom the Mossi are descendants) by Islam. Now, however, young men seek to have themselves circumcised, not for any religious reason, but rather to avoid the ridicule of their friends and, especially, the scorn shown by Mossi women for an uncircumcised man.

304 We shall attempt to describe below the circumcision ceremony among the Mossi.

After the harvest, toward the end of November, the young men state their wish to be circumcised. Since the cost of supporting

304 a boy [264] during the circumcision process is considerable for his family, the latter will not agree to it unless they have had a good harvest.

Besides, since the affair must be quite grandiose in character, thirty to fifty boys from the ages of twelve to fifteen must be ready before permission will be given for the operation. After the relatives have consulted the soothsayers (bagba), they seek out a Yarga (Dioula of Mandé origin) or a Silmimoaga (the Toucouleur [Tukolor] of Mossi country) and ask him to perform the operation.

This surgeon for the occasion is called gounni.

Kéogo. A site is selected where there are no habitations, preferably a sandy area. A circle is laid out and walled with Mossi secco (sogsak' pinri). The size of the enclosure, the keogo, is governed by the number of boys who are going to live in it.

The boys are brought to the gate of the kéogo, which is strictly guarded by zoumsi (men who have already been circumcised). Each boy assumes a serious and defiant manner to give himself courage. Inside the circle there is a milling crowd, and there is such a noise of drums and songs that the following ritual sentence is barely audible: "Moaga wanian konlebin kouli moaga (You came in a Moaga -- here meaning an uncircumcised man -- you will not be a Moaga when you go out)."

The operation. Before the boys are brought in, a hole has been [265] dug for each one. The child is blindfolded and made to sit on a stone in front of the hole. The prepuce, stretched out as far as possible and tied with a string, is placed on a block of wood and cut off with a single slash of a razor (barga). The penis is held up with a split reed to permit the blood to flow into the hole. I believe that there is a special hole into which all the severed prepuces are thrown. A string tied around the boy's hips replaces the reed after the operation to keep the penis away from the body and thus avoid painful rubbing.

304
551 Bankoensé yuiya (names given to circumcised boys). The names vary according to the rank of each boy. The first to be operated upon is called Falinga; the second, Ouanda; the third,

304 Wanzouri; and so on through Nodo, Kou'wandé, Wemba, etc.
 551 There is even the favorite who is called Ponsom because he is given special privileges.

304 Zouinsi yuiya (names of the guards of the kéogo and of those who watch over the bankoensé). Seven days after the ceremony some of the zouinsi are chosen to supervise the kéogo, to take care of its organization and to arrange the games. A real hierarchy is involved, beginning with the Soré Naba ("chief of the path"), who is, so to speak, the head of the establishment, and proceeding down in order of [266] precedence through Sobila Naba, Dag'noré, and Dag'Nobila (gatekeepers). The role of the latter is to allow any zounga [singular of zouinsi] to re-enter the enclosure while preventing any of the circumcised boys from leaving the enclosure without their permission. The Galli and Gallibila are in charge of the drums. The Imam and the Imambilla ("chiefs of pardon") protect the bankoensé from ill-treatment by the zouinsi. Then there is Banzambo, a comic character who is always performing all sorts of dances to relieve the monotony of life in the kéogo and give the boys a little fun. His gyrations always amuse the company. The duty of two characters called Wagdré, "chief thief," and Wagd'billa, "little thief," is to steal the meat acquired by the newly circumcised boys during forays or the saghbo brought by the boys' parents. They compensate for their mischief, however, by putting the younger children to bed and feeding them when the games go on too long. They do this in spite of the vigilance of the guards.

The Nané and Nanebilla, along with the Bankoé, are the masters of ceremonies.

Support of the circumcised boys. As we have already pointed out, the relatives of the boys are expected to provide them with morning and evening meals during their recovery. Actually, the boys get very meager rations since more than half of the food -- after the choicest bits have been set aside by the lembéré (person in charge of tasting the food) -- is reserved [267] for the many zouinsi. Since most of them are bachelors, they welcome a chance to eat their fill.

304 Care given the sick boys. A specially arranged corner of the
 752 kéogo serves as an infirmary. Treatment consists of washing the

304 wound with warm water which often is not scrupulously clean
 752 since the gourd in which it is kept is not always washed. The
 [278] wound is dusted with a charred substance (made by burning the
 bark or leaves of the baguem-baga plant) mixed with karite butter.
 It is bandaged with a leaf from the kantonga bush, tied on with a
 bit of thread. Once the wound has begun to heal, it is wrapped
 in cotton strips. The water used to wash the wound is thrown
 into a hole that is covered with a stone.

304 Special language of the kéogo. In order to prevent the Moaga
 198 (here meaning an uncircumcised person) from understanding what
 is said within the kéogo or between the boys and the guards, a
 special language has been developed. Some of its words are as
 follows:

Water (kom in ordinary Mossi language), hargo;

Millet cake (saghbo in Mossi), lâbo;

Sauce (zindo in Mossi), kirou;

Fire (bougoum in Mossi), -nionom;

Beer (dam in Mossi), sonnom;

A robe or blanket (fougou in Mossi), pilli;

Mat (pinri in Mossi), wanghé. [268]

304 Distinctive attire of the circumcised boys (bankoanga). His
 292 costume, wallimba or zougba, consists of a fringed loincloth with
 pockets. He carries a rough stick (zâbré) with which he hunts
 rabbits and other small game.

304 He accompanies his evening dance with an instrument called
 293 wassimba, a curved stick on the end of which are strung four or
 five pieces of gourd, roughly circular in shape; with holes bored
 through them.

304 Tom-toms. The bankoensé (newly circumcised boys) dance
 534 to the beat of two drums like those used in the warba and waongo
 535 (see the chapter on native dances). The drums are called
gangango when they accompany other dances, but here they are
 called gallyans.

304 Prohibitions in the kéogo. A Moaga (1) is strictly forbidden

1. "Moaga" is used here in a pejorative sense and means an uncircumcised man.

304 to look into the enclosure. If he should commit such an indiscretion which is considered a gross blunder, he at once suffers the consequences. He is immediately dragged into the circle undressed, and circumcised without any consultation with his relatives.

It is strictly forbidden to enter the kéogo, with néoda (shoes), a pougla [269] (red fez), and kandé (spears). If a canton chief should take it into his head to visit the circumcised boys -- an unlikely situation -- he would have to leave all his insignia of rank outside.

304 Since it has been observed that young men who have had
834 sexual intercourse before their circumcision had difficulty in being healed after the operation, they are advised to avoid sexual intercourse for the first few months after the scars form.

304 They do not eat wagha sauce (a sauce made of the immature
162 fruit of the wagka, a tree of the kapok family).

304 Required exercises for the bankoensé. The bankoensé are
526 required to perform painful and tiring exercises, which considerably retards their recovery. We shall describe the principal ones below.

Very early in the morning when it is very cool -- we have pointed out that the ceremony takes place at the beginning of the cool season -- the boys are awakened and forced to lie prone on the cold sand without any covering. This is the bourga. Naturally enough, the limbs become a bit stiff, so they are roundly whipped with berrella (branches of certain trees), ostensibly to give them warmth and strength. Then, to the beat of the tom-toms, they must do the exercise called guella. This difficult feat involves jumping like a frog from a crouching position [270] and at intervals making a circular movement with the legs. They may also be required to do the even more difficult nagda, an exercise which involves walking on the hands with the legs in the air. Another exercise requires the boys, starting from an erect position, to bend backwards until the hands touch the ground. This is called kaougsèga, "back breaker." The unfortunates whose hands fail to reach the ground get a bump on the head. There are also movements of the head called zouanka, like those made by Kassonké girls and the Wiskamba of Mossi country.

304 Release. The stay in the kéogo lasts from 90 to 100 days. Around the eightieth day, when all the boys have recovered, their heads are shaved and they are told that they will be released a week later. Chickens (koug'nossé, "chickens of the stone") are killed, and each boy is given half a chicken.

Actually, the ceremony of liberation will not take place until fourteen days after this ceremony. All of the boys' belongings (loincloth, bandages, sticks, etc.) are burned by the zouinsi in a great fire near the kéogo. The bankoensé, completely naked, must jump over the fire and run straight to the house of the Bankoé without looking back. A new enclosure has been built there, and the boys are given skirts, robes, trousers, and caps of various colors which their relatives bought or [271] had made for them. Everyone on this occasion wants his son to be distinguished by the richness of his costume. The procession of the circumcised boys is a motley and picturesque sight. One or two days after this, the boys must go back toward the kéogo at nightfall for the last time. They stop before reaching it, however, and return to the house of the Bankoé with their backs slightly bent; this is called léssé-bourgou.

The boys enjoy a veritable festival for a week. They are in high spirits from the admiration they receive, from being able to perform dances other than those peculiar to the circumcision ceremony, from drinking beer, and especially from eating their fill, since their parents have sacrificed chickens and sheep for the occasion.

Finally, very early one morning, some zouinsi collect the boys' handsomely decorated sticks (wangha or dibissi) and go off to bury them in holes dug outside the village. This is the end of the ceremony, and now the boys may return to their homes.

304
572 All of the boys have undergone the same rough treatment and have led the same life for about 100 days. During this time of trial, friendships and lasting attachments have been formed. They will henceforth call each other by their "circumcision names" and will help each other since they are now friends.

304 In order to forestall possible reprisals -- since in the kéogo no distinction is made between the son of a riaba and a peasant's son -- custom forbids the [272] new initiates to hold a grudge against the zouinsi for the ill-treatment to which they were subjected.

304 The Nioniossé and the Soukoaba do not practice circumcision,
184 and that is why they are called Mossé. In villages inhabited
solely by Nioniossé, a kéogo may not be set up. At present some
boys of Nionioga origin ignore the prohibition and go to their
mother's village (Yastenga) to have the purifying operation (1).

[775]

1. Apparently the Moslems believe
that those who are circumcised will
not go to hell.

304 Among the Mossi many Christians voluntarily have themselves
832 circumcised; women -- even Christians -- feel a certain repug-
626 nance for the touch of the "Moaga."

Finally, excision is also esteemed among the Mossi, except
among the Nioniossé who do not practice it. Girls who are not
excised are scorned by their friends and will have no lovers.

1: Delobsom--144 I-5 (no date) 1933

FA28 Mossi FA28

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The Author Mr. Dim Delobsom.

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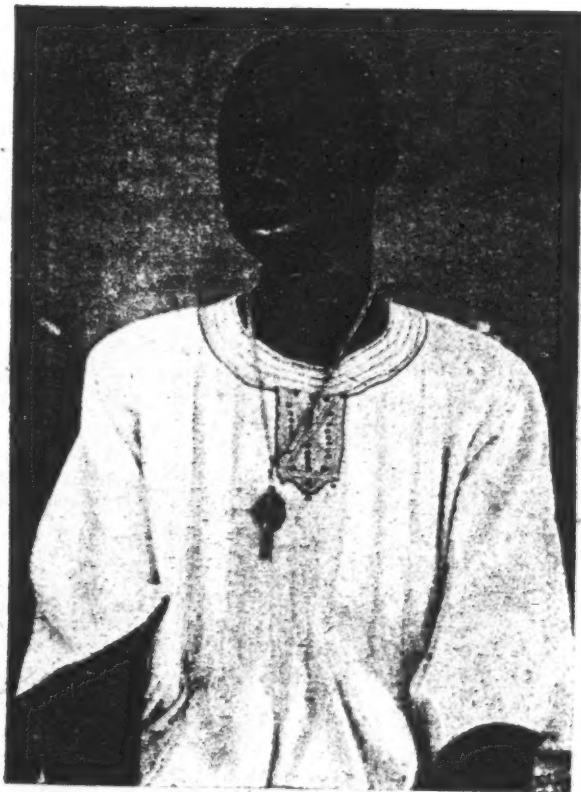


Mogho Naba Kom Ruler of the Mossi.

From the Mission of the White
Fathers at Ouagadougou.

1: Delobsom--146 I-5 (no date) 1933 FA28 Mossi FA28

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A Mossi Type.

From the Mission of the White
Fathers at Ouagadougou.

1: Delobsom--147 I-5 (no date) 1933 FA28 Mossi FA28

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Drummer (bendré).

From the Mission of the
White Fathers at
Ouagadougou.

1: Delobsom--148 I-5 (no date) 1933

FA28 Mossi FA28

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Mossi Girl.

From the Mission of the
White Fathers at Ouagadougou.

1: Delobom--149 I-5 (no date) 1933 FA28 Mossi FA28

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1: Delobson--150 1-5- (no date) 1933

FA28 Mossi FA28



Ministers of the Mogho Naba and their Servitors.
(From left to right, the First, Third, and Fourth
Ministers.)

From the Mission of the White Fathers
at Ouagadougou.

1: Delobson--151 1-5 (no date) 1933

FA28 Mossi FA28

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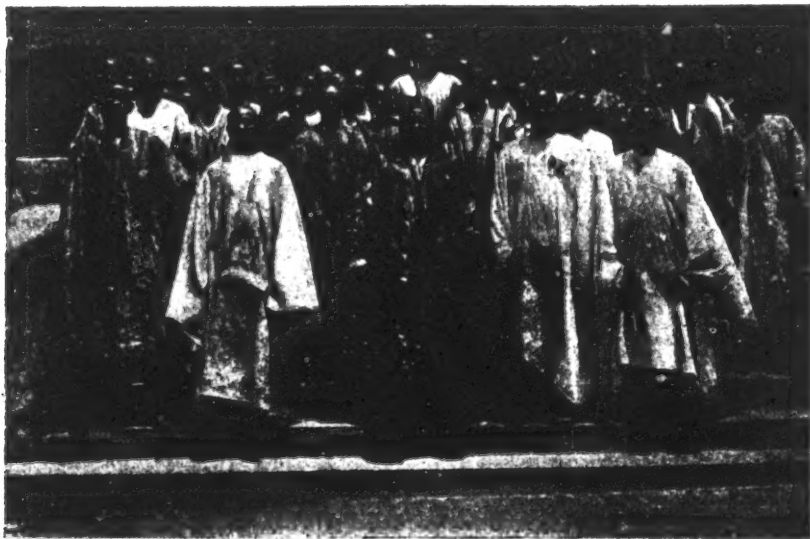


Mogho Naba
The Ruler of all the Mossi and a Servitor.

From the Mission of the White Fathers
at Ouagadougou.

1: Delobson--152 1-5 (no date) 1933

FA28 Mossi FA28



The Mogho Naba and Three of his Ministers.

From the Missions of the White Fathers
at Ouagadougou.

1: Delobsom--153 I-5 (no date) 1933 FA28 Mossi FA28

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Gounga N: Gounga Naba
Third Minister of the Mogho Naba.

From the Mission of the White
Fathers at Ouagadougou.

1: Delobsom--154 I-5 (no date) 1933 FA28 Mossi FA28

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Tansoba
Mossi Minister of War.

From the Mission of the White
Fathers at Ouagadougou.



The Baloum Naba on horseback among his Courtiers.

From the Mission of the White
Fathers at Ouagadougou.

1: Delobson-155 1-5 (no date) 1933 FA28 Mossi FA28

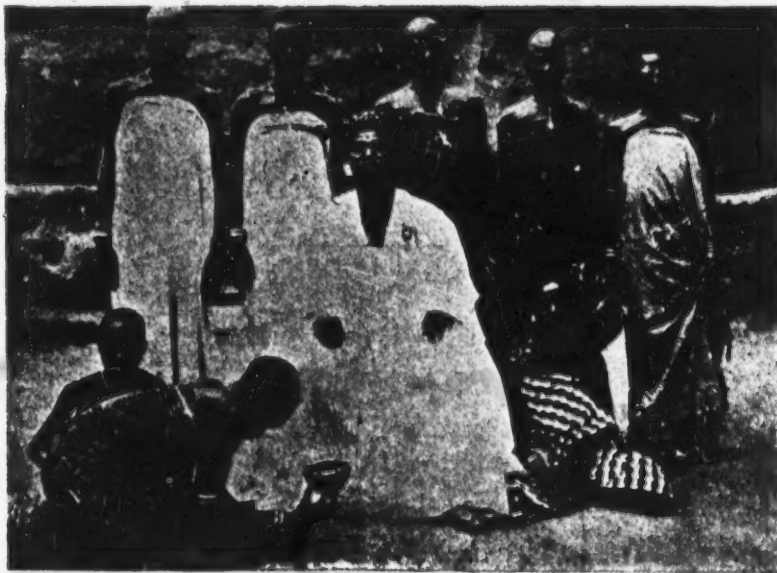
1: Deloborn--156 1-5 (no date) 1933 FA28 Mossi FA28

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Native Blacksmith.

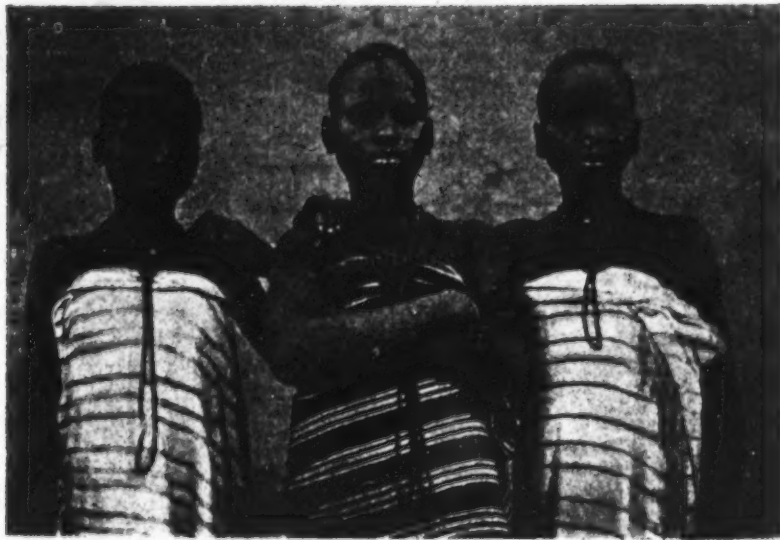
From the Mission of the White
Fathers at Ouagadougou.



The Third Minister of the Mogho Naba (Gounga Naba) among his
Servitors.

(The latter wear Christian medals)

From the Mission of the White
Fathers at Ouagadougou.



Three Mossi Girls.

From the Mission of the White
Fathers at Ouagadougou.

I: Delobson--158 I-5 (no date) 1933 FA28 Mossi FA28

1: Delobom--159 1-5 (no date) 1933

FA28 Mossi FA28

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Mossi Woman Spinning.

From the Mission of the White
Fathers at Ouagadougou.

1: Delobson--160 1-5 (no date) 1933

FA28 Mossi FA28

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The Home of the Gounga Naba.

From the Mission of the White
Fathers at Ouagadougou.

1: Delobsom--161 I-5 (no date) 1933 FA28 Mossi FA28

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Mossi Weaver.

From the Mission of the White
Fathers at Ouagadougou.



Mossi Warba Dancers.

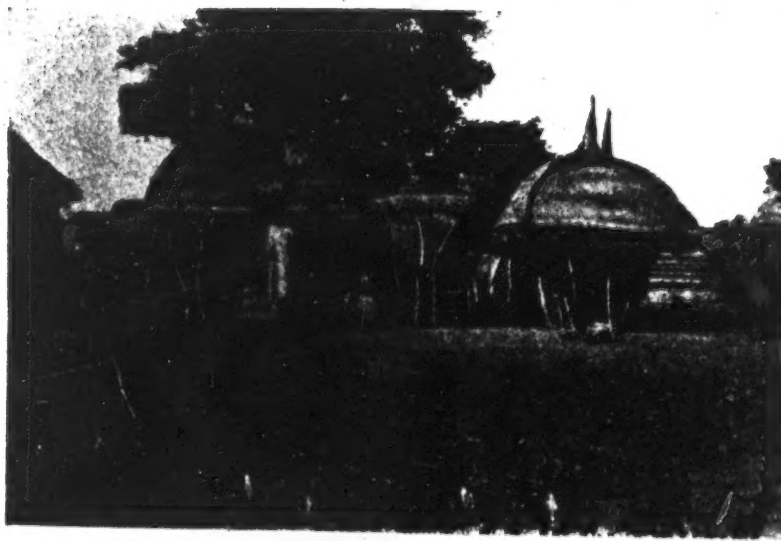
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Fathers at Ouagadougou.

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1: Delobsom--163 1-5 (no date) 1933

FA28 Mossi FA28

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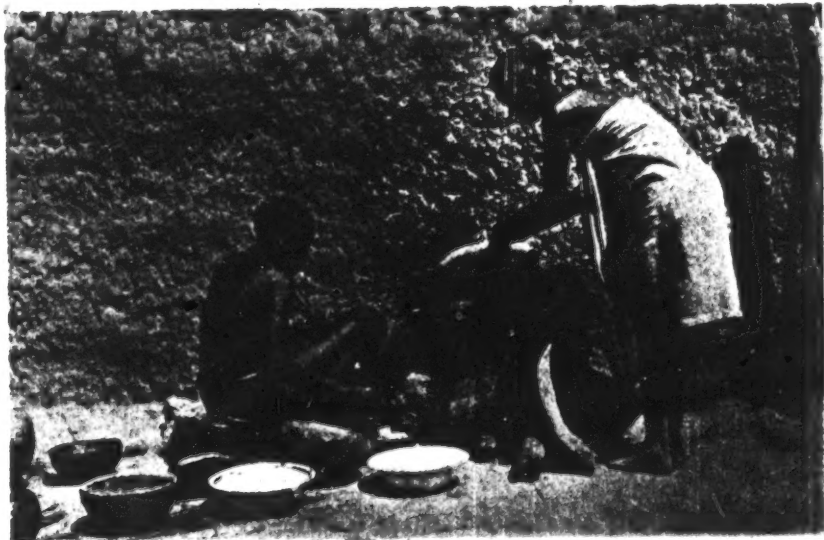


Large Mossi Granaries.

From the Mission of the White
Fathers at Ouagadougou.

415
1: Delobson--164 1-5 (no date) 1933

FA28 Mossi FA28



Making Saghaio.
Millet Mush, Food of the Mossi.

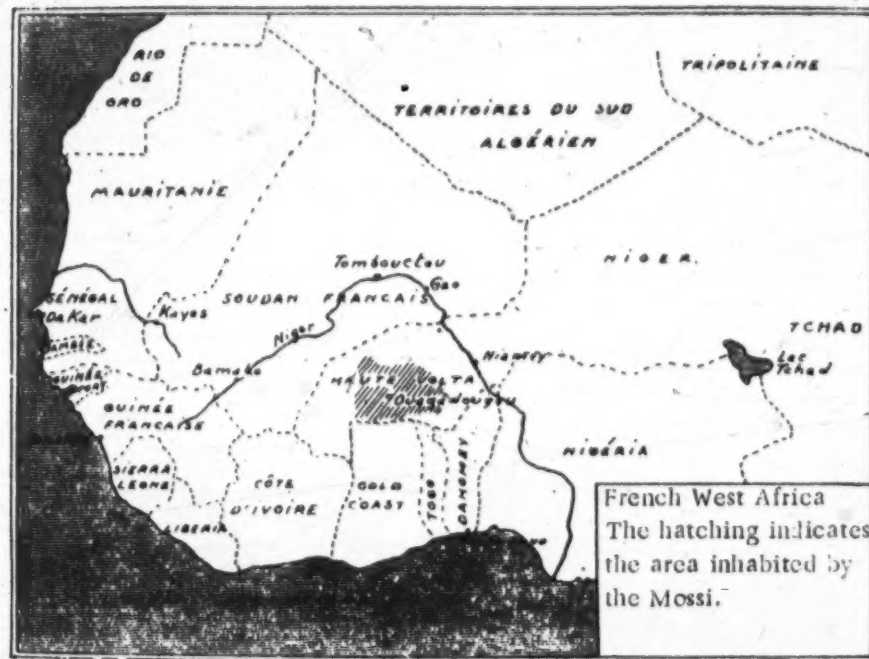
From the Mission of the White
Fathers at Ouagadougou.

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A Canton Chief (Doulougou Naba) and his
Servitor.

From the Mission of the White
Fathers at Ouagadougou.



From the Mission of the White Fathers at Ouagadougou,